

Fantastically Savage by **qweenofasadland**

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Romance, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Characters: Billy H., Steve H.

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-05-04 01:03:33

Updated: 2018-12-24 03:12:31

Packaged: 2019-12-12 23:19:05

Rating: M

Chapters: 13

Words: 65,673

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: In the summer of 1985, Steve Harrington is a far cry from the person he was two years ago. He spends his days wallowing in self pity and spends his nights dreaming of the impossible. Steve is not the only one who has changed. After everything that had happened last fall, Billy Hargrove decides to try and let go of his pent-up anger and resentment. Hawkins is in danger, yet again.

1. Chapter I: The Secret

"Denied anything ardently desired, the individual or state will argue and parley just so long - then, if the impelling motive be sufficiently great, will cast aside every rule and break down every acquired inhibition, plunging viciously after the object wished; all the more fantastically savage because of previous repression."

- H.P. Lovecraft

Chapter I:

The Secret

Billy

Billy took one last drag on his cigarette before flicking it into the street. He shoved his hands into his pockets and leaned against his blue Camaro. Though it was still early in the day, the summer heat warmed Billy's car. He took off his sunglasses, closed his eyes, and enjoyed the sensation of the sun warming his face.

He let out a discontented sigh as he reminisced about living in California. Billy had intended to spend the summer there with some of his friends. However, his father had confiscated all of his savings in order to pay for the damage caused by their last fight. Ironically, his father had inflicted the majority of the damage – and not just on the house.

Billy was awaiting the arrival of the rest of the construction crew. To make up the savings he had lost, he had to work two jobs. Construction by day and by night he worked in a garage as a mechanic assistant. Per usual, the rest of the crew was late. Billy put his sunglasses back on and was about to light another cigarette when he saw a familiar face.

Steve Harrington had pulled into the drive across the street, where his new girlfriend lived – though she could hardly be called that. She wasn't anywhere near to being on Billy's radar but he learned her name and association with Harrington from Max. Billy thought that normally she wouldn't be on Harrington's radar either. She was not

ugly but she was not part of the popular social group. Her and Steve weren't dating per se but apparently spent a lot of time together.

Samantha – that was her name – was a goth theater chick. She wore dark makeup, dyed her hair, and usually hung out with the other theater dorks except for the rare party. She starkly contrasted with Nancy Wheeler, perhaps that was part of the appeal. However, Harrington was not the same person as he was last fall and to be honest, neither was Billy.

Steve

Steve immediately noticed Billy Hargrove as he turned onto Samantha's street. He was hard not to notice. He was leaning against his car with his hands in the pockets of his denim cutoff shorts. For the first time since Steve had met Billy, he actually looked peaceful with his eyes closed and his face relaxed. Steve had been aware that Billy had been working across from Samantha's house for nearly a week. He had been to her house every day since he found out.

Everyone assumed that he and Samantha were sleeping together. Jonathon became friends with her first and then he introduced her to Steve and Nancy. Nancy was not too fond of her but Steve and Samantha became quick friends. By graduation, Steve was spending most of his time with Samantha. However, they were just friends.

After everything that had happened the past two years, Steve had a difficult time adjusting back to normal life. He had no friends apart from Jonathon, Nancy, and the kids. Eventually, school became even more meaningless than it had been previously and his grades plummeted. Though he cared deeply for both Jonathon and Nancy, Steve was at his breaking point when Samantha was introduced to the group. Samantha was a welcome relief from not only Jonathon and Nancy's love fest but also from any talk of the Upside Down.

Unlike Nancy and Jonathon, Steve did not see the point in always discussing the atrocities of the Upside Down. At times he wished he could forget it all and go on pretending that nothing had happened. He knew that it was unhealthy to bury it and that had even led to the demise of his and Nancy's relationship. Eventually, repressing the memories also caused Steve to experience nightmares.

The nightmares started after Nancy had broken up with him and he was at his lowest. The constant antagonization that he had received from Billy did not help matters either. When he started helping Dustin and the other kids, it gave him something to keep his mind occupied from Nancy and the nightmares. However, at night his head was still filled with the horrors of the Upside Down. Funnily enough, when Billy had beaten him senseless, Steve dreamt peacefully.

Afterwards, Steve realized he had made the mistake of throwing the first punch. He had already lost a fight with Jonathon so he should have known better than to get into another fight. However, there was absolutely no fucking way that Steve was going to stand by as Billy bullied the kids. Steve understood that he had started it and that of course Billy would hit him back but was having trouble comprehending the extent to which Billy took it. There was so much rage and passion in his punches and surely Steve was not the cause of such anger.

Steve became increasingly interested in learning about Billy; he wanted and needed to know where that anger was coming from. Even in the beginning, while he was still recovering, Steve couldn't blame Billy. He could sense that his rage and hatred were deep-seated and not directed towards him, though Steve probably made a good punching bag in the moment. He tried pressing Max for information on her stepbrother, but she knew about as much as he did.

At school, Steve had to endure Tommy's insults about his bruised and broken appearance but to his surprise, Tommy did not know Billy was responsible. Billy had taken Steve's throne, with everyone referring to him as "King Billy". He was the school's star basketball player and popular with all of the girls, just like Steve had been at one time. Steve still played basketball with the team but he and Billy avoided each other like the plague. Steve wondered if it had to do with Max's threats.

Somehow, Steve's thoughts and dreams had been replaced with Billy. He knew it was an obsession, but for some reason Steve could not shake his curiosity even after his face was no longer a constant reminder. One day, much to Steve's surprise, Billy had approached him in the hallway. Steve was apprehensive but tried to play it cool.

He was not expecting Billy to apologize.

He recalled with perfect memory the words that Billy had said, "Hey Harrington, you got a sec?" Steve wordlessly nodded and stood next to him. "I... there's been something I've wanted to say for a while now. I'm... sorry." It wasn't much but it was an apology and more than Steve had ever hoped for. Max shared her own surprise with the group the next week. Billy had apologized to her as well and gave her an explanation for why he had acted so aggressively towards her and Lucas.

All that Max had initially known about the family's move from California to Indiana, besides issues with Max's dad, was that Billy had gotten expelled for fighting and Neil and Susan. However, there was more to it. Billy was friends with a black guy and after other students threw racist remarks at him, Billy started a brutal fight leading to his expulsion. When Billy's father found out, he was pissed and gave Billy the worst beating he'd ever received. Not because he was kicked out of school but because he had been defending a black person.

Billy explained to Max that his aggression towards her friendship with Lucas was his attempt at protecting Max from his father. He was worried that if his dad found out, Max could receive a beating. Max also told the group that Billy was also starting to be nice to her – well nice for Billy. He even bought her a new skateboard. Max wasn't sure of the reason behind Billy's newfound kindness but thought it might have been due to her threats.

Steve did not learn anything else about Billy for the remainder of the school year. However, he did notice that Tommy was no longer stuck up Billy's ass. Steve heard a rumor from Nancy that Carol had broken it off with Tommy in order to go out with Billy. Steve never witnessed Billy and Carol together but that didn't mean anything. Though he was skeptical that the rumor was even true considering how long Tommy and Carol had been going out.

With what little Steve knew about Billy, he desired to learn much more. As he pulled into Samantha's driveway, Steve saw Billy move. Billy put on his glasses and pulled out his pack of cigarettes. He put one to his lips and was about to light it when he looked up and saw

Steve. Trying to act casual, Steve attempted to make his way to Samantha's front door.

"Harrington!" Billy shouted across the street wearing that demonic grin, "Never too early for some pussy, right?" Steve could feel his face turn red with embarrassment. Not knowing what to say, Steve simply nodded his head and rang the doorbell. It was only a few seconds before Samantha opened the door, but it felt like an eternity. Before the door could close, Steve could hear Billy whoop.

Samantha heard and turned to Steve, "What is that all about?" He could feel himself blushing, "Oh... nothing. You know how those types of guys can be." Samantha scoffed, "You mean assholes? Yeah I have an idea. C'mon let's go upstairs." Samantha put on the Smiths album, which Steve begrudgingly had to admit he was starting to like. Samantha was starting to complain about missing their gig in Chicago back a couple of weeks ago for about the hundredth time. Steve nodded his head but was not really listening; he was focused on watching Billy from the safety of Samantha's window.

Billy

Billy didn't know what made him shout at Steve, though he did enjoy teasing him. He loved to see Harrington turn red and squirm and it didn't take much. During that first basketball practice where Billy had showed Steve up, he tried giving Harrington some advice that he didn't take. In the showers, after Tommy was being a dick about Harrington's breakup, Billy tried to be friendly and give him some dating guidance. Though he didn't want to give Harrington the impression that he was too friendly, so he turned off the shower to fuck with him.

When Billy was looking for Max and found her with Harrington and those other boys, he was worried for her. He found it odd that Harrington was there with a bunch of kids. He had to make sure she was okay and Harrington was in his way. He knew Max was in there with Lucas and he had to put a stop to her hanging out with him. Billy had witnessed his father abuse his mother, she sometimes hit him first and always talked back. Susan was meek and quiet, so Billy hoped that it would prevent her from getting smacked around. Max, on the other hand, was the complete opposite. Her attitude and

penchant for hanging out with a black boy would surely guarantee a beating from his father.

Billy had endured abuse from his father since he could remember. His mother would try to defend and protect him but that just ended in her becoming bloodied and bruised as well. Eventually, after a couple hospital visits, she stopped intervening. However, she was always there afterwards to comfort Billy. When Billy was 15 years old, his mother drove off the road and hit a tree. She wasn't found for hours after the accident and she had bled to death. Sometimes Billy has the thought that his mother may have drove off the road intentionally.

Neil met Susan at work, less than a year after Billy's mother, Emily, had died. Within six months, Neil and Susan were married. Before their marriage, Susan had been divorced from Max's dad for a few years. Max had spent a lot of time with her father before the move. Billy assumed that's why she was a tomboy and had an attitude. He also knew that was the other reason why they had moved to Hawkins, Susan and Neil wanted a fresh start as a family without Max's father getting in the way.

Despite her attitude, Max had really grown on Billy. He tried to hate her but despite his best efforts, including the attempt to make her hate him, he could not help but care for her. He no longer called her his "stepsister"; she was his sister, his family. Billy explained to Max, excluding some details, why he was so hostile towards her friendship with Lucas. He tried to make amends by apologizing, which included the purchase of a new skateboard. However, he understood that it would take Max awhile to forgive and begin to trust him.

The remainder of the construction crew had arrived a short time after Harrington went inside. Billy was working on the framing for the roof and glanced across to Samantha's house. The sun's glare was preventing Billy from seeing inside the windows. He wondered if Harrington could see him and remembered how nervous he was when he apologized to Steve.

Billy had a lot of questions following the night he assaulted Harrington. He had awakened in the front yard the next morning with a massive headache and not being able to recall all of the details from the night before. He remembered hitting Steve and how good it

had felt, plus there was the evidence of his bruised knuckles. He also remembered Max taking a baseball bat and just barely missing his junk before making him promise to leave her and her friends alone.

Something that continued to plague Billy since that night was his conflicting emotions regarding the fight with Steve. Harrington deserved a beating but Billy knew that he had taken it too far. After dealing with his father earlier that night and then to have Harrington tell him what to do, he was furious and took it out on him. Yet, as guilty as Billy felt, he still enjoyed it. Billy loved the rush of adrenaline, the feeling of his knuckles hitting flesh and bone. He could almost get off on it.

When he saw Harrington afterwards, Billy was ashamed for finding joy in violence. Steve's bruised and swollen face made Billy sick to his stomach. Harrington's normally pale and perfect complexion had been transformed into a red, yellow, and purple mess. One of his eyes, which reminded Billy of a sad puppy, had broken vessels and was blood red around his brown iris. His soft pink lips had become red and puffy. Billy had brushed away the thought of what lips like that would feel like.

During basketball practice, Billy avoided Steve out of the guilt he felt. He knew that he needed to apologize, regardless if Harrington accepted it or not. Billy could not muster the courage to say sorry until after Steve was healed. He procrastinated until one day he saw Harrington in the hallway. Billy quickly stammered out an apology and walked away. He did not want to see that same look of contempt on Harrington's features that he'd seen so many times before.

Billy and the rest of the crew were packing up at sundown when he noticed Steve leaving. Something came over Billy once he saw Harrington looking his way. He smiled, blew Steve a kiss, and continued to smile as he flipped Harrington off. Steve looked bewildered for a second before shaking his head and laughing as he got in his car. As he pulled out of the driveway, he rolled down his window and proceeded to give Billy the finger while still wearing a grin. Billy thought that was the only time that Harrington had genuinely smiled at him.

Steve

Steve was still smiling halfway home. He didn't know what to think at first when Billy had blown him a kiss. His heart skipped a couple beats until Billy gave him the finger. Steve then laughed nervously as he got in the car but he could not get rid of the smile on his face. He wanted to respond to Billy other than laughing, so he rolled down the window and flipped him off. Still smiling, Steve remembered watching Billy from Samantha's window. At one point, Billy had removed his shirt and the sight of his glistening body had awakened a feeling that Steve was starting to become familiar with.

Of course Steve had experienced attraction and arousal, but nothing to this degree. The best that Steve could describe it was pure carnal lust. His entire body was enflamed in desire for Billy. Steve had quickly looked away and thought of naked grandmothers, he did not want to experience the awkwardness of a hard-on at the moment. He didn't want Samantha to get the wrong idea. No girl, not even Nancy, had produced anything close to what he was feeling. He wanted Billy in every way imaginable.

As soon as Steve arrived home, he went straight to his room and stripped naked. While he lay on his bed, Steve began stroking his rock hard cock. He thought about Billy and how he had felt seeing him shirtless and working up a sweat. Steve spit into his hand and smoothly stroked his dick, biting his lip and going as fast as he could. He imagined Billy's mouth around his cock and before his imagination could get too creative, Steve came. He grabbed a towel that had been lying on his floor and cleaned up the mess. "What the fuck?" Steve said out loud, "What is fucking wrong with me?"

He wanted to punch the wall, hit something. Steve started pacing around his room, trying to suppress the urge for violence. He nervously ran his hands through his hair and screamed in exasperation. Luckily he was the only one home. Steve was experiencing a full range of emotions today. He was feeling a mix of regret and guilt along with self-hatred. The self-hatred was a familiar friend, at least since Nancy had broken up with him. He was feeling absolutely disgusted with himself at the moment, just like he always felt after masturbating with Billy on his mind. It certainly wasn't the first time and probably far from the last.

There was only one gay student at Hawkins that Steve knew of, he

was constantly harassed and occasionally beat up. Hawkins was a small town in Indiana, what more could be expected? Steve knew that he couldn't possibly be gay, he liked girls and he liked fucking girls. He had even loved a girl. But what other explanation could there be? He'd heard the term bisexual but did not exactly know what it meant. One thing Steve knew for certain was that he could never let anyone know about his feelings for Billy.

2. Chapter II: The Fourth of July

Chapter II:

The Fourth of July

Billy

Due to a disagreement between the owner and contractor, Billy had not been back to the house in Samantha's neighborhood for nearly a week. Surprisingly, he had not run into Harrington in town either. Billy could not stop thinking about their last interaction. He felt a connection to Harrington. It started out as a competition, Billy had reigned supreme at his school back in San Francisco and "King" Steve had obviously been the top dog at Hawkins. The competition eventually progressed into an animosity that led to their fight. After the fight, Billy at first felt guilty and now he couldn't quite put his feelings about Harrington into words.

Billy never disliked Steve, even when he had been in a weird situation with Max and had initiated the fight. Billy could not blame Harrington for both because he had overreacted and started the hostility by bullying Lucas. As much as Billy hated to admit it, Harrington was a likable guy. He was good looking but seemed to not notice just how attractive he was. It was easy to see why Steve had been so popular. Billy could not determine how Harrington felt about him now, though he desperately hoped that Steve might grow to like him. Steve smiling and laughing the other day was a good sign that it could be possible for them to be friends.

However, Billy did not just want to be friends with Harrington. Back in San Francisco, it was not too out of the ordinary to be gay. Here and in his father's opinion, it was a death sentence. Luckily, he had kept his secret hidden from his father and from everyone in Hawkins, at least almost everyone. He had heard the rumors about himself and Carol, half of which were true. Billy didn't know why Tommy and Carol had broken up but one day he had seen Tommy slamming and punching his locker in the locker room.

Billy sat on the bench drying his hair with a towel and asked what

was wrong. Tommy plopped down next to Billy and said that he and Carol broke up and then put his head in his hands. Billy attempted to comfort him by patting him on the back and telling him something similar to what he'd said to Harrington, "That blows, man. There are plenty of bitches in the sea though. You've been missing out, screwing the same chick for so long." Tommy looked up, "I don't think I'll ever be able to get over her."

"Sure you will. It will just take time," Billy had told him before placing a hand on Tommy's leg. He must have lingered a second too long because Tommy had suddenly jumped up, "What the fuck man? Are you gay or something?" Billy had stood and glared at him, trying to hide his racing pulse, "No, just trying to make you feel better." Tommy looked him over for a while before smirking, "No, you are totally queer. It makes sense." Billy had been seething with anger and punched Tommy in the nose before walking away.

Billy had acted without thinking when he saw Carol hanging out in the parking lot. "Hey beautiful, I heard you are single now. Do you wanna go out sometime?" She blushed, "I just got rid of a boyfriend so I'm not looking for another and aren't you and Tommy friends?" Billy flashed her a seductive grin, "I'm not looking for a girlfriend either, just a good time. And who cares what Tommy thinks." Her pale skin reddened and she smiled, "I'm free tonight. Pick me up at 8?" "See you tonight at 8 then."

Billy had picked Carol up from her house and they went straight to Lover's Lake. They made out for a while and then Carol gave him a sloppy yet effective blowjob. Billy made sure to brag about it in detail to the entire basketball team so that Tommy would eventually hear about it. Billy had assumed by Tommy's unusual quietness and seemingly bruised ego that he did know what happened between Billy and Carol. Hopefully it had changed Tommy's mind about Billy's sexual orientation. Billy had to keep up the charade by dating several other girls until the end of the school year.

Billy had known he was gay for a few years and in San Francisco he was not completely out of the closet but he was not in it either. However, San Francisco had a more supportive community for gay men. Of course, that did not mean everyone there was tolerant. His father was one example and there were several kids at school who

were homophobic assholes. When Billy had told Max about the fight back in California, he had left out some important details.

The black "friend" had actually been someone Billy was sleeping with. His name was Charles and Billy had been seeing him in secret for a couple of weeks before the fight. One day, Billy and Charles had been whispering sweet nothings to each other in the hallway. A few of the blatant homophobes witnessed their intimacy and shoved them apart. They surrounded Charles and started shouting racist and homophobic slurs at him.

Two of them had grabbed Charles and the other was about to start hitting him when Billy jumped in. He began fighting all three of them. He had knocked two of them unconscious and had slammed the third against the wall when two teachers intervened. The administration had refused to listen to his side of the story, telling Billy that it didn't matter and he would be expelled regardless of the situation. The school called his father and when they arrived home, Neil Hargrove dealt out a punishment of his own. God only knows what his father would have done if he'd known the entire truth.

After they had moved to Hawkins, Billy made sure his father witnessed him dating girls. At one point, his father and Susan had interrupted Billy getting to second base with a girl in the house. After sending the girl home, Neil dragged Billy to his room and smacked him across the face. "Don't ever bring another whore into this house you disrespectful little shit!" he had yelled before reminding Billy to pick up Max from the arcade. Following that incident, Billy figured he had gotten away with making his father believe he was straight.

When Max had been missing and his father had gotten violent, the worst of it was that his father had called him a "faggot". Billy feared that his father had found him out but had come to the conclusion that his father was being an asshole like usual and called him names to tear down his self-esteem. He continued dating girls to try to prevent any suggestion that he could be gay, not only to his father but also to Tommy and the rest of Hawkins High. However, there was one major problem: Steve Harrington.

Billy had immediately been attracted to Steve from the first moment he met him at that Halloween party. Their introduction was

awkward, Harrington was obviously on bad terms with Tommy and too concerned with his drunken girlfriend. Billy couldn't help but laugh when he saw Harrington accidentally spill Nancy's drink on her. She was wasted and too stupid to listen to Steve, she deserved it. Billy didn't know what Steve had ever seen in her. For someone so smart, Nancy was an idiot. She'd have to be to let someone like Steve go.

At first, Billy had based his attraction to Harrington on his appearance alone. But it was apparent early on in his infatuation that there was something else that attracted him to Steve. Because Billy had his own secret, he could usually tell when someone else was hiding something. He did not know what Harrington was concealing but he knew that it was eating away at him just the same. Unlike Steve, Billy was good at burying his feelings, masking them with a smile and a big ego. Harrington wore his heart on sleeve, which Billy saw as a weakness but it also made him admire Steve.

Billy's infatuation with Harrington had begun to develop into something more after their fight. In the moment, Billy had been blind with rage. When he recalled Steve's determination to defend those kids, Billy realized that he liked more than just Harrington's looks. Steve attempted to disguise how much he cared but it was not hard to see the truth, even before the fight. Before and during the fight, Harrington really let his guard down. Though Steve had thrown the first punch, Billy could tell that he was holding back. It was as though Harrington was worried about hurting Billy.

In the moment, Billy had taken advantage of Steve's weakness and had beaten him senseless. Now, Billy found Harrington's weaknesses endearing along with everything else about him. Billy had admired Steve from afar during the remainder of the semester. The most contact he had with Harrington had been apologizing, which was not only difficult because he felt so terrible but also because he had a crush on Steve. Billy wished that it was possible for Harrington to feel the same but he had a feeling his infatuation would be unrequited.

Billy had noticed and heard from Max that Steve was interested in him. Billy shrugged it off as simply curiosity about the new asshole in town. Billy had been very good at reading gay vibes in San Francisco.

Even there and even in the 1980's, mistaking those signals could cost you your life. Billy was uncertain if he was picking something from Steve or if it was just his own desire for Steve to be gay. He was head over heels for Nancy and Billy had heard about the numerous sexual conquests of "King" Steve. In fact, most of the girls Billy had gone out with had dated Harrington.

Billy would just have to silently suffer with his secret crush on Harrington or find someone to help him get over it. However, he was beginning to think that it would be impossible to do either. His desires and feelings towards Steve were so strong that he was unsure if he could contain them. Even he did manage to conceal his feelings, Billy doubted that he would ever get over Harrington. Besides, there was only one openly gay kid at Hawkins and he was definitely not Billy's type.

On July 1st, Billy decided to celebrate his birthday by getting a six-pack at the convenience store. A girl worked there who he always flirted with and she let him buy beer. He wished that he could afford something stronger though. He was just about to walk through the door when he nearly ran right into Harrington. Steve nearly jumped out of his skin at the sight of Billy. "Harrington you look like you've seen a ghost." He was paler than usual and had deep dark hollows under his eyes.

Harrington stared into Billy's eyes with that familiar look of contempt. Suddenly something in Steve's eyes changed, Billy thought it was a look of fear. Without warning, Harrington shoved Billy. "Fuck you. How insecure do you have to be to constantly pick on everyone? Do you ever shut the fuck up?" Steve shoved him again. Billy was unsure of the situation but started laughing, "Are you on your period Harrington? You are much more moody than usual." Steve grabbed Billy by his t-shirt, "You think you are hilarious, don't you?"

Steve let go of his shirt and took a step back before smacking Billy. He smacked him again on his other cheek, "Still laughing?" Billy wasn't laughing but he was grinning at Harrington. This was ridiculous. Steve smacked Billy again but much harder, "Is this funny?" He hit him again, harder, "Why don't you hit back?" Billy was still grinning but started to get quite irritated, he couldn't figure out

what Steve was playing at. Harrington then punched Billy square in the jaw. Billy didn't want to do it but enough was enough so he threw a punch back, knocking Steve to the ground. "You just cannot get it through that thick skull of yours, Harrington. Plant. Your. Feet," Billy quipped as he walked into the store.

Steve

Billy's words were still ringing in Steve's ears. What was wrong with him? When he bumped into Billy, he had been thinking about him, wondering what he was doing. That was what had startled him so much. Billy had made a comment, asking if he'd seen a ghost. Steve hadn't slept for days, he'd been lying awake in bed thinking about Billy and hating himself. When Billy made that comment, Steve thought about how correct Billy's statement had been. Billy was haunting him in his thoughts and dreams. Steve had suddenly got angry, more with himself, but he was angry with Billy too.

Billy loved being an asshole and was always wearing that stupid grin. Steve couldn't take it anymore so he had shoved Billy. Then Steve had thought that perhaps if Billy beat him senseless again, he would hate Billy. He tried smacking him at first but he just smiled. Finally, Steve punched Billy and he responded. However, he did not respond exactly how Steve had wanted. Billy punched him, not very hard, but it was enough to knock him off his feet. Instead of beating him to a pulp, Billy had simply walked away but not before telling him for the third time to plant his feet. Steve should really take that advice.

A few days later on July 4th, Steve was over at Samantha's listening to music and feeling terrible about himself when the doorbell rang. Samantha returned upstairs from answering the door with Jonathon and Nancy in tow. "What are you two doing here?" Steve questioned them. "Looking for you," Nancy cheerily answered. "Why?" Steve already assumed he wouldn't like her response. "Well..." Nancy looked at Jonathan and back to Steve, "In case you forgot, it is the 4th of July and if you haven't heard there is going to be a huge party at Laurie's lake house. I think we should all go, it will be fun."

Steve laughed, "I'm pretty sure everyone in this room hates parties, so can you explain how we are going to have fun?" Nancy rolled her eyes, "Oh, this coming from King Steve, party animal? The irony."

Her words stung a little and Steve had to bite his tongue, though he wanted to ask her why her opinion of partying being bullshit had changed. He knew the answer to that question anyway – Jonathon. Nancy had noticed Steve's reaction and changed her tone, "Please? I think we could all use a night out." Steve sighed and gave in, "Okay." If he was being honest, he really did need a night out.

Steve went home and showered, Jonathon was picking everyone up in a few hours. He was looking through his closet when he had a sudden thought – what if Billy is there? Steve didn't know why he didn't think about it before. After running every possible situation and outcome through his mind, he decided that the best option would be to stay home. There was a chance that Billy wouldn't be there but Steve didn't want to take that chance. He pulled on a pair of basketball shorts and sat on his bed.

He had almost forgotten that Jonathon was supposed to pick him up when the door rang. "Shit," he said in dismay. He thought that he could perhaps ignore the doorbell and they'd go without him. It was silent for a couple minutes but then someone started ringing the door repeatedly – Nancy. Sighing, he stood up and made his way downstairs. He opened the door, "Oh hi Nance, I didn't know anyone was here. You should have rung the doorbell a hundred times." She rolled her eyes at his sarcastic remark before looking him over, "I hope you are not wearing that. I figured you were going to try to get out of going but that's not happening." She pushed her way past him and walked into the house.

Nancy looked around the empty house, "You know, I'm surprised you haven't hosted any parties this summer." Steve's parents had been traveling around Europe the entire summer. "I haven't had a party here since..." he trailed off, knowing that Nancy would remember. He could tell by the look in her eyes that she knew, "Oh, right." He immediately changed the subject, knowing that the current topic caused Nancy a great deal of pain. "I think I should probably go change. I'll be back in a minute," Steve said, as he made his way upstairs.

He hastily looked through his dresser for something to wear. Steve did not want to show up wearing the typical patriotic attire, though at one time that would have been his go-to. He thought about pulling

a Samantha, wearing all black. Finally, Steve settled on a plain white polo and a pair of jeans. Maybe if he didn't stand out, Billy wouldn't even know he was there. At least that's what he hoped would happen.

Nancy was still waiting downstairs and smiled as she asked him, "Ready?" Steve nodded and grabbed his keys before following Nancy out the door. Jonathon was waiting out in his car. Though they tolerated each other, Steve couldn't exactly say that he and Jonathon were friends. Jonathon did not look too happy as Steve and Nancy approached the car, "What took so long?" Steve thought about taking the opportunity to tease him but thought otherwise, Jonathon had a temper. Nancy answered instead, "Steve was trying to get out of going with us."

They picked up Samantha and as Steve had predicted, she was wearing all black. As she slid into the back seat next to him, he joked, "You know we are going to a party and not a funeral, right?" "What? I had no idea," she feigned bewilderment. No matter the weather or the occasion, Samantha always wore black. Steve looked around the car, "Nancy, you are the only one of us wearing anything remotely patriotic." She was wearing a red and white striped shirt with denim shorts. Jonathon had on a grey shirt, dark jeans, and his black leather jacket he was always wearing. Surely he was sweating.

As they pulled up to the party, Steve could feel his heart pounding. He really hoped Billy would not be at the party. For the first hour or so, luckily there was no sign of him. Steve was not sure how much alcohol he had consumed but he was starting to feel the effects. He was becoming much more relaxed and was even dancing. If Steve was dancing, especially by himself, he was definitely drunk. He was laughing and having a good time when someone tapped him on the shoulder. It was Billy.

His words were caught in his throat and Steve did not know how to react. Billy spoke first, "Harrington, can I talk to you for a minute?" Steve could barely hear him over the music. He knew what Billy wanted to discuss and though he dreaded the conversation, Steve couldn't help himself. "Okay, but it's too loud. Can we go outside or something?" Steve yelled over the music. It was loud but Steve was also concerned with Samantha, Nancy, or Jonathon hearing the conversation. Steve didn't want them to know because he was

embarrassed about picking a fight for no reason with Billy.

"Sure," Billy agreed but before they could head outside, the music was turned off and an announcement was made. "Hey everyone! We are going to set off the fireworks in five minutes so get your asses outside!" Steve was about to head out with the rest of the crowd when Billy grabbed his arm, "Let's go upstairs instead." "Don't you want to see the fireworks?" Steve inquired. "Nah, that's okay. Once you've seen one firework, you've pretty much seen them all. Right?" Steve nodded in agreement and headed upstairs with Billy.

Billy knocked on one of the bedrooms before entering the empty room. Steve walked in and then Billy closed the door behind him, which made Steve a little nervous. He cleared his throat before asking, "So what did you want to talk about?" Billy glared at him and raised an eyebrow, "Seriously? Surely you are not that stupid." Steve looked at the ground, not bearing to look Billy in the eyes. "I assume you want to discuss our run in the other day." Billy scoffed, "Yeah, you think? What was that all about?"

Steve sat down on the bed and tried to gather his thoughts, which was even more difficult in his drunken state. He could still feel the traces of Billy's touch on his arm when he had grabbed Steve earlier. "I'm sorry about being such a dick. It really wasn't about you, I was having a bad day," Steve attempted to bluff his way through the conversation. Billy sat down next to him, "It was my birthday so I could probably say I was having a worse day than you. First you start a fight and now you are lying to me. I'm a good liar, great actually, and I can easily tell when someone else is being dishonest. Tell me the truth Harrington."

Steve's throat became dry and he could feel himself starting to sweat. Billy must have noticed how much distress he was in; he put a hand on Steve's shoulder. "I know we aren't anywhere close to being friends and we've both been complete assholes to each other but Harrington..." He squeezed Steve's shoulder and looked away, "... Steve, you seem like a really great guy and I would like us to be friends. I know you may not want anything to do with me but I just want you to know, you can talk to me. What's wrong?"

He could not believe what Billy was saying; he'd never in a million

years think that Billy would want to be friends with him. Steve could tell that Billy was being sincere and seeing Billy show concern at all, let alone for him, caused Steve to get emotional. He couldn't contain it any longer and tears began to fall. He tried to turn away but Billy still had his hand on Steve's shoulder and pulled Steve into a hug. "It will be okay," Billy said to comfort him. Steve looked up into Billy's blue eyes and he smiled, not that horrible menacing grin but a sweet and soft smile.

Steve could not stop himself; he impulsively kissed Billy on the lips. He quickly pulled away but to his astonishment, Billy grabbed Steve by the back of the neck and kissed him back. Steve ran his hand over Billy's chest as Billy grabbed onto his hair. The kiss seemed to last forever until there was a sudden *BOOM* from the fireworks. Steve quickly jumped up in a panic. Billy stood slowly and put a hand out, as if he was calming a wild animal. "That shouldn't have happened. It didn't mean anything. I'm just really really drunk. I'm sure you are too. I should go find my friends. Sorry," Steve blurted as quickly as he could before running out of the room.

What the fuck? Steve asked himself as he made his way to the lakefront. *What the fuck did I do? What is wrong with me?* Terrible thoughts ran through his mind, he feared that Billy would tell everyone. He could just imagine what people would say and do to him if people found out that he had kissed a guy, and not just any guy but Billy fucking Hargrove. It was a great kiss though and Billy had kissed him back. Perhaps that meant that he wouldn't tell anyone. Steve cringed at what Billy might think of him now. He took some deep calming breaths as he saw Nancy, Jonathon, and Samantha.

He wanted to leave, run home and hide, but he was nearly 10 miles from his house. Also he didn't want to ask Jonathon to take him home, which would only prompt questions that Steve didn't want to answer. He instead stood silently next to the others and watched the fireworks. He could still feel his pulse racing and he jumped every time a firework went off. The fireworks didn't last much longer and everyone started to head back inside. Steve lingered and Nancy noticed, she said something to Jonathon and he and Samantha followed the crowd.

She waited until they were nearly alone before asking, "Are you okay Steve? What happened with Billy?" He sighed as he ran his hand through his hair, avoiding Nancy's gaze. "I don't really want to talk about it Nance," Steve told her. He tried to walk past her but she grabbed his arm. "Steve, come on. We used to talk." Steve pulled his arm out of her grasp, "Yeah 'used to', past tense. You have Jonathon to talk to now. Leave me alone." He left her standing speechless as he walked towards the house. Though he was terrified of seeing Billy in the house, he couldn't handle anymore of Nancy's questions.

Inside, Steve downed beer after beer. Nancy kept giving him concerned glances but kept her mouth shut. He didn't see Billy for a while and figured he might have left. Steve began to get extremely drunk. He was slurring his words and unstable on his feet. He asked Jonathon, "Do I... do I look as drunk as I feel." Jonathon laughed, "Definitely, but that's okay." "Well damn." Someone was passing around a joint and he took a few hits. Soon, Steve was sitting on the couch feeling great. Then he saw Billy across the room.

Billy

While everyone was out watching the fireworks over Lake Jordan, including Steve, Billy grabbed a bottle of scotch from the liquor cabinet and headed out to his car. He was still in disbelief that Steve had kissed him. He smiled at the thought and had butterflies in his stomach. The feeling dissipated when Billy remembered how Steve had reacted afterwards. Billy hoped that he was just scared and didn't mean what he had said, because it sure as hell didn't feel like nothing.

When Steve had kissed him, Billy had been in shock. By the time he was aware that was going on, Steve had pulled away. Without thinking and desiring more, Billy had grabbed Steve and kissed him back. His lips were so soft and inviting. When Steve had put his hand on Billy's chest, his body had tingled all over. Thinking about it again nearly made Billy hard. He took a swig of the scotch before letting out a long sigh. He knew that it was impossible for him and Steve to be together, even if Steve wanted it. Hawkins was a dangerous place if you were gay.

Billy took another swig of the alcohol but decided against drinking

anymore, he needed to have a straight head if he was going back in to the party. Even if he couldn't talk to Steve, he wanted to be near him. After sitting and thinking for a while, Billy left his car and went back inside. He immediately spotted Steve. He was sitting on a couch, between Samantha and Jonathon, who had Nancy on his lap. Suddenly, Steve met Billy's gaze. Billy quickly looked down but when he looked back up, Steve was still staring at him. Billy smiled shyly, not knowing what Steve was thinking yet amused that Steve was looking at him.

Steve didn't return the smile but continued to watch Billy. He was unsure how Steve would react, but Billy started to make his way towards Steve. He approached slowly but Steve looked alarmed and attempted to stand up. He fell back on the couch, his intoxicated state making him lose his balance. Jonathon tried to help him up but Steve pulled away and fell backwards over the coffee table. Some people laughed and Steve's friends tried to help him up. Billy quickly made his way over to see if he was all right.

"I'm fine, leave me alone!" Steve angrily shouted at his friends. "Steve..." Nancy began but stopped short of what she was going to say when Steve gave her a pointed glare. He tried to get up by himself but fell again. "I think we should probably get you home," Samantha told him. Nancy had finally took notice of Billy and crossed her arms, it appeared she believed that Billy was the cause of all this. *And she is probably right*, Billy thought to himself. "No, I don't want to go home! You guys are having a good time, I don't wanna spoil it. Can you help me Samantha?" Steve surely knew that Billy was there but was doing a good job of ignoring him, regardless of his blood alcohol level.

Samantha helped Steve to his feet but he sat back down on the couch. "What if I took you home and came back?" Jonathon suggested. "No, you... you should stay with Nance." Billy chimed in, "I could take him home." All four of them looked at Billy, with Samantha and Jonathon just now realizing he'd been standing there. Nancy narrowed her eyes, "Why? So you can try to kill him again?" "That was a simple misunderstanding. I just want to help." Nancy scoffed, "A misunderstanding? What about tonight?" Billy was about to come up with an answer when Steve announced, "I don't feel good. I think I'm

going to be sick."

Jonathon quickly grabbed a nearby trash bin and put it in front of Steve. A few seconds later, he vomited into the bin. Nancy looked from the sick Steve to Billy and then to Jonathon before asking Billy, "You'll take him straight home?" Billy quickly nodded in response. "Jonathon, is it? Could you help me get him out to my car? And one of you girls grab the trash can, if he pukes in my car I *will* kill him." Steve popped his head up and weakly laughed.

Jonathon and Billy flanked Steve's sides, with his arms braced on their shoulders as they made their way out to the car. Samantha had a hold of the trash bin containing Steve's vomit. They sat Steve in the passenger seat with the bin in his lap. "Are you sure you can manage him by yourself?" Jonathon asked Billy. "Yeah I can manage. Where does he live?" Jonathon gave him directions before thanking him. When Samantha went back inside he added, "Not that I care, but for Nancy's sake, if anything happens to him you will pay for it. Okay?" Billy was now absolutely convinced Jonathon was a major douchebag, "Yeah okay." Billy got in the car and drove off.

Steve was still hunched over the trashcan but wasn't puking, "Are you doing okay over there?" Steve laughed bitterly, "I'm fantastic." They did speak for the remainder of the car ride. When they pulled up to Steve's house, Billy asked for the keys. After not getting a coherent answer, Billy hopped out of the car and made his way over to the passenger side, opened the door, and searched Steve's pockets. "Hey, hey man! Wha-what do you think you're doing?" "Relax, I'm just looking for your keys. I'm not trying to blow you." Steve stared at Billy with his mouth agape, causing Billy to burst into a fit of laughter.

Finally finding his keys, Billy unlocked and opened the front door before returning to the car to fetch Steve. He grabbed Steve with one arm and used the other to protect Steve's head from hitting the car. Slowly and carefully, Billy led Steve into his house. He helped him onto the couch in the living room; he didn't dare try to get him up the stairs on his own. Billy put Steve's feet up for him and then pulled the blanket that was on the back of the couch over him. Steve eyes were unfocused but he looked at Billy, "Thank you." In a few moments, he was sound asleep.

Billy was afraid to leave him alone, not being sure how much alcohol Steve had consumed. Billy watched Steve sleep for several hours before succumbing to exhaustion himself. He awoke at dawn with the morning sunlight blinding him. He quickly checked on Steve and made sure he was still breathing before getting up to get a glass of water and some aspirin. Billy placed them on the table closest to Steve and then went to find a bathroom. He was unzipping his pants when Steve burst in. "Look out," he barely got out before diving for the toilet. He started to throw up, prompting Billy to kneel down next to him before holding Steve's hair out of his face and rubbing his back with his free hand.

Steve threw up for several minutes. Finally he lifted his head, "Thanks, but I'll be okay. You can leave if you want." "What if I don't want to leave?" Steve looked into Billy's eyes for a long time before answering, "I'd want you to stay." Billy smiled, "You think you will get sick again?" "Maybe, why?" Billy looked him over, "You should probably take a shower." He had vomit on his shirt and his hair was plastered with sweat. "Yeah, I need one. Can you help me up?" Steve reached his hand out and Billy grabbed it, helping him to his feet. He turned the shower on and tried to remove his shirt unsuccessfully. "Here, let me..." Billy assisted him in pulling off the soiled shirt.

Billy had seen Steve shirtless many times but not in such an intimate setting. He longed to touch him but resisted the urge, "Can you manage your pants by yourself?" Steve nodded and took off his pants, leaving him in his underwear. Billy stood motionless, staring. Steve looked into Billy's eyes as he pulled off his briefs. Billy made an effort to not break eye contact with him, though he wanted to allow his gaze to travel downwards. Steve turned away and entered the shower, giving Billy a quick glimpse of his ass. Though he would have liked nothing more than to shower with Steve, Billy thought against it and gave Steve his privacy.

He looked around the house for another bathroom; he still had to take a piss. He found one upstairs in the hallway. After using the bathroom, Billy could still hear Steve in the shower so he went to explore the room adjacent to the bathroom. He immediately knew that it was Steve's room. Billy looked around for a bit and nearly crawled into Steve's bed but was concerned that the shower was still

running. He went back downstairs and knocked on the door, "Hey princess, are you okay in there?" There wasn't a response so Billy shouted, "Steve! Don't make me come in there!" He finally answered, "Yeah, I'm fine I'll be out in a minute!" A few moments later, Steve emerged from the steam-filled bathroom.

Steve had a towel around his waist with both his hands in front of him. He looked like he was trying to hide something but was unsuccessful. Billy couldn't help himself and smiled, "Now I see what was taking you so long." Steve blushed from the chest up. "Looks like you didn't quite finish," Billy cautiously reached towards Steve's hands and the towel. Steve turned to the side but Billy stepped towards him and whispered in his ear, "Show me." Steve looked apprehensive but slowly moved back towards Billy and released the towel. Billy looked down at Steve's hard cock for a moment. He then looked up at Steve who was bright red and avoiding meeting his eyes.

3. Chapter III: Pizza and

Chapter III:

Pizza and Petroleum Jelly

Billy

Billy gently grasped Steve's chin and turned his head so that they were face to face. Then Billy slowly wet his lips and went in to kiss Steve. Billy made sure he was gentle and slow, sensing Steve's shyness. After a couple seconds, Steve began to caress Billy's cheek. Billy took it as a sign and began to kiss more passionately, using tongue and light nibbling. Steve held onto Billy and pulled him closer. Though he could tell Steve did not want him to pull away, Billy took a breath before moving his kisses downward. He started at Steve's neck and then slowly moved down to his chest. Billy used his tongue to trace down Steve's body from chest to stomach, causing Steve to softly moan.

When Billy reached Steve's belly button, he kneeled on the ground and placed both of his hands on Steve's hips. He kissed Steve below his navel and stopped just above his cock. He moved down to his thighs, starting to kiss him an inch or so above his knee and work upward. As he neared Steve's crotch, Billy switched from kissing to tongue. He could feel Steve shudder. Billy stopped as he reached Steve's pubic hair. Billy gently pushed Steve against the wall and grasped his cock with one hand as he looked up at Steve, "Is this okay?" Steve quickly nodded before closing his eyes and leaning his head back.

Billy used his hand to guide Steve's cock into his mouth. As soon as his lips closed around Steve's warm and still wet cock, Steve let out a loud ecstatic moan. Billy drew his cock deeper and deeper until it was well lubricated with Billy's saliva. Using his hand and his mouth on Steve, Billy was getting very aroused listening to Steve's sighs and moans. Suddenly, Steve put his hand on Billy's head, "Wait, let's go upstairs." Billy followed Steve up to his room. When they reached the bed, Steve sharply turned around and grabbed a hold of Billy's shirt before kissing him. As they kissed, Steve began removing Billy's

clothes.

Once they were both naked, Steve climbed into bed with Billy following. Billy stopped short though and was going to continue his work on Steve's dick. "No, come here." Steve commanded Billy, who did what he was told. "I like it when you're bossy," Billy smiled. "Duly noted," Steve said before kissing Billy. As he kissed him, Steve pushed Billy onto his back before sliding on top of him. Billy tried to prop himself up on his elbows but Steve place a hand on Billy's shoulder and eased him back, "Lay down."

Billy could feel his cock throbbing; he loved hearing Steve tell him what to do. As they kissed, Steve explored Billy's body with his hands. He then placed one of his hands around Billy's dick and began stroking it. Billy ran his hands down Steve's back before giving his ass a squeeze, causing Steve to chuckle and Billy laughed along with him. All of the sudden, Steve stopped stroking Billy's cock. "Hey..." Billy started but Steve put a finger to his lips and shushed him. Steve scooted down towards Billy's cock, but instead of putting him inside his mouth, Steve raised Billy's legs and pushed them apart.

Steve grabbed Billy's dick with one hand and held it aside as he sucked on Billy's balls. Billy took a sharp intake of breath because he was not expecting that. Steve began to stroke Billy's cock again while he had Billy's testicles in his mouth. His hand continued its work but Steve's mouth moved away. Billy then felt Steve's tongue as he licked him from his ass to his balls. "Turn over," Steve said in harsh whisper. Billy liked where this was headed and heeded Steve's command. Steve slightly lifted Billy by his hips before spreading Billy's ass cheeks apart. Billy felt Steve's warm breath as he brought his face close.

Steve started by kissing and nibbling on Billy's butt cheeks, working his way closer and closer to Billy's asshole. Suddenly, Billy felt Steve's tongue in between his cheeks, eliciting a deep moan. He licked and kissed his ass, working his tongue in and out. Billy looked back and watched Steve put his index and middle fingers in his mouth to wet them. Steve began to slowly insert one of his fingers into Billy's ass. Steve continued licking, sucking, and nibbling Billy's ass as he thrust first one and then two fingers into Billy's asshole.

After a few minutes, Steve used his spit to liberally lubricate Billy's ass and his cock, "You want me to fuck you, don't you Billy?" "Yes, god yes. Please fuck me Steve," he begged. "Say my name again." "Steve, fuck me." Steve then slowly started to insert his cock inside of Billy's ass. Billy had been fucked in the ass a couple times so it wasn't too painful. Once Steve's dick had fully penetrated him, it became very pleasurable as Steve pounded him. Billy could tell when Steve was getting close to coming.

Billy arched his back as Steve grabbed him around the waist with one arm and wrapped his other hand around Billy's dick. Billy felt and heard Steve's deep breaths and soft moans in his ear. Billy was about to blow when suddenly Steve grabbed him tighter and bit his shoulder, coming inside him. Billy had an orgasm in what seemed like less than a second later. Steve slid off of Billy and was lying on his back, using a towel to clean himself off. Billy lay next to Steve and assessed his own mess. He feebly attempted to use his hand to wipe it up unsuccessfully.

Steve, seeing Billy struggle, leaned over and began to lick up Billy's cum. At first Billy was in shock but after Steve had finished, he chuckled, "Harrington, you are one dirty slut." Steve lightly hit him in the stomach, "Don't be an asshole! You know you love it." Billy smirked and nodded in agreement. "You're so cute when you are mad Harrington," Billy told Steve. He hit Billy in the stomach again, "Shut up!" He paused before adding, "Just call me Steve, at least when we are alone." Billy was still smiling and brought Steve up to face him. "Okay, Steve," Billy said quietly before kissing him.

Steve

Billy was deeply breathing as Steve lay on his chest. Steve looked up at his face; he looked even more beautiful when he was sleeping. Steve longed to touch Billy's long dark lashes, his sun-kissed cheek. However, he did not want to wake him. Steve still couldn't wrap his head around everything that had happened between them. Though his hangover had prevented him from having morning wood, when Steve started thinking about Billy in the shower, he immediately became aroused. He had attempted to get rid of it because he would be embarrassed if Billy saw his erection. Unfortunately, Billy had interrupted him.

When Billy had reached for him and asked to see him, Steve of course wanted to show him despite his embarrassment. He had been bolder before he was sporting a hard-on, intentionally removing his underwear in Billy's presence. Billy had made sure to keep eye contact though. However, Steve had the feeling Billy had looked at his ass as he got in the shower. When he was fucking Billy and Billy had grabbed his ass, Steve was certain that Billy had snuck a peak at his butt. Steve desperately wanted to talk to Billy, discuss everything, yet at the same time he didn't want to wake him up.

Eventually, Steve fell asleep as well. When he woke up, Billy was no longer in his bed. He sat up quickly and surveyed his room, looking for Billy's clothes. They were gone. A slight panic set in as he thought he might have been dreaming. He quickly pulled on his briefs and went downstairs, wanting to find any sign that Billy had indeed been there. He quickly glanced around when he was at the bottom of the stairs and saw no indication that Billy had been there. Steve let out a disappointed sigh and felt tears welling up behind his eyes.

He solemnly walked into the kitchen to find something to eat. Even though he was upset, Steve was also starving. To his pleasant surprise, Billy was at the stove. "Hey sleepyhead, you don't have much food but I've managed..." he stopped talking and cooking when he saw Steve wiping tears away. Billy walked over to Steve and brushed the tears off of his cheek, "Steve, what's wrong." Steve placed his hand over Billy's, half sobbing and half laughing he told Billy, "I thought for a moment that it had all been a dream."

Billy embraced Steve, letting him cry into his shoulder for a moment. Steve smelled something burning, "Billy, the stove." He sniffed the air, "Oh fuck!" He ran over to the pan on the stove and scraped a burnt grilled cheese sandwich into the trash, "Well there goes our dinner." Steve wiped his face, "That's a bummer, I'm starving." "I could go get us something," Billy suggested. Steve thought for a second before pulling Billy in for a kiss and then whispering, "I don't want you going anywhere."

After kissing Billy again, Steve added, "I'll just order a pizza." Billy had a look of panic cross his features briefly. "What? Not interested in pizza?" Billy rubbed his thumb across his lips, "It's just..." Steve waited for him to finish but quickly lost his patience, "It's just what?"

Billy sighed, "What if someone sees us? Everyone knows my car and someone might think that it's weird that I'm here." Steve suddenly felt nervous, "You're right." He contemplated the options, he was starving and wasn't ready to be apart from Billy yet, so he had to think of something else. "My dad's car is in the shop while my parents are on vacation, you could put your car in the garage. And when the pizza guy comes you could hide or something."

Billy looked at him, shaking his head and smiling, "We're a little too old for hide and seek aren't we?" Steve looked at him dumbfounded, causing Billy to laugh. "I'm just kidding, I'll hide when the pizza guy comes. You know, you don't always have to take everything so seriously, Steve." In response, Steve rolled his eyes. He used to be like Billy, using humor to disguise his emotions, but that had been before. It was still light outside but Steve checked the time, to be sure, before ordering a pizza. In the summer, the sunset was sometimes after 9pm. It was a quarter til 8, so there was time to order delivery. Steve fully dressed before making the call.

Steve just liked pepperoni but Billy wanted everything, so Steve ordered two pizzas. While Steve had been on the phone, Billy went out and put his car in the garage. When Billy came back inside, there was an awkward silence. They both knew that they needed to talk but weren't sure how to start the conversation. Finally, Billy broke the silence, "So where are your parents?" "Uh, they've been traveling Europe all summer." Billy nodded, "What have you been doing all summer, besides banging that goth chick?"

Steve laughed, "I have not been 'banging' Samantha, we're just friends. We just hang out, listen to music, and talk." Billy chuckled, "How did I not realize that you were gay?" Steve hit his arm, "Shut up!" Billy continued laughing, "I'm just teasing you. So other than not fucking Samantha, what have you done all summer?" Steve wanted to be honest but wasn't quite ready, "Well I barely graduated and I wanted to stay here, so I agreed that I would go to work for my dad. He said that I could spend my summer doing whatever I wanted and then when he and my mom get back, I have to start working for him."

Billy stared at him with intensity, "That still doesn't answer my question." Steve sighed, "I really haven't done much besides hanging out with Samantha, Jonathon, and Nancy other than babysitting

and..." he sighed again, "thinking about you." Billy's smile spread from ear to ear, "Really? You..." he was interrupted by the doorbell ringing. "Shit, you better hide." Billy quickly went into the kitchen, out of site. Steve answered the door, exchanging cash for two pizzas. With the pizza guy out of sight, he met Billy in the kitchen.

"Coast is clear," he told Billy as he set the pizzas down on the countertop. Billy grinned, "So what were you saying about thinking about me all summer?" He continued to smile as he took a slice of pizza. He then took a slow seductive bite as he awaited Steve's response. Steve could feel his face flush a bright red. "Ugh, this is so embarrassing," he said as he hid his face in his hands. Billy put down his slice of pizza and pulled Steve's hand from his face, "Don't be embarrassed." He kissed Steve and then confided in him, "I've wanted to kiss you since the first moment we met."

Steve looked up at him with suspicion, "Really?" "Really." The pizza was forgotten for a couple minutes while Billy and Steve made out. Steve's stomach grumbled, making the two of them break apart and laugh. "I really am starving," Steve remarked. "Let's eat then. We have *all* night," Billy said, his voice dripping with desire. As they ate the pizza, Billy and Steve delved into conversation. Steve told stories about his former high school life as King Steve and talked about his strained relationship with his father. Billy also talked about his father, just saying he was a major asshole and that Steve's father was a saint by comparison. Billy revealed everything that had happened with Charles back in San Francisco.

The new information from Billy prompted Steve to ask, "So even though you know you are gay, why do you still sleep with girls? I mean, I've heard the rumors, are they true?" Billy nodded, "Yeah I've slept with several girls here and back in California. As to why, you know just as well as I do that being gay, especially here, is dangerous. I like girls, I don't mind fucking them, but I just don't feel the same way about them that I do about guys. There's a lack of connection." Steve shyly inquired, "Do you... do you feel a connection to me?" Billy smiled and looked down, "Isn't it obvious? Don't you feel it too?"

Steve held his hand, "Yes, I've never felt anything like it before." Billy looked into his eyes, "Not even with Nancy Wheeler?" It was Billy's

turn to be suspicious. Steve answered honestly, "Not even with her." Billy kissed him and before they knew it, they were both naked in the kitchen. Steve dropped to his knees and took Billy into his mouth. Billy grasped the counter and moaned as Steve flicked the tip of his cock with his tongue. Steve continued sucking and teasing Billy, who had curled his fingers in Steve's hair.

Billy was close to coming but suddenly pushed Steve away, "It's your turn." Billy pulled Steve up to his feet and led him to the couch. Billy pushed him onto the couch before dropping down between his legs. He gently kissed Steve's thighs, making his way to Steve's cock. Billy slowly and tantalizingly put Steve into his mouth. Steve took a sharp breath when Billy's wet lips finally closed around him. Billy's slow and teasing touch was driving Steve insane. He was nearly finished but pushed Billy away. "What? Do you really want me to stop?"

"No, I want you to fuck me," Steve told him. Billy raised his eyebrows, "Are you sure Steve?" "Yes, I want your cock inside me. Now." Billy wet his lips before asking, "Do you have any petroleum jelly?" Confused, Steve informed him, "Yeah, over in the bathroom, in the medicine cabinet. Why?" Billy laughed, with a slightly nervous ring to it, "Well... I don't want to hurt you." "I didn't hurt you last night, did I?" "No, no. I've had anal before so I'm slightly used to it. But since you've never been fucked in the ass and..." Billy trailed off and looked at his erect penis.

Steve understood what he was getting at. Though their cocks weren't much different in length, Billy's was slightly longer and much thicker. "Oh, okay. Yeah the bathroom is just down the hall. Hurry up." Steve felt slightly emasculated but knew that Billy had his comfort in mind. Billy returned to the living room a few seconds later, petroleum jelly in hand. "Turn around and hold onto the arm of the couch. Yes, like that," Billy instructed as Steve followed his commands. Billy squeezed and kissed his ass, "Mmm I love this ass of yours, Steve." Hearing his name and 'love' in the same sentence sent shivers down Steve's spine.

Billy spread Steve's cheeks apart and let his tongue slowly travel from balls to back. Steve shuddered. Billy licked Steve's asshole while using one of his hands to stroke Steve's dick. After a few minutes and several moans later, Billy stopped and scooped out some jelly. He began stroking Steve's cock again with one hand and used the other

to spread the petroleum jelly on Steve's asshole and his own cock. He first teased Billy's asshole with his fingers, lubing and stretching him. After what seemed a long time, Billy finally started to insert his dick.

He was slow and careful, adding more lubricant as it was needed. It was slightly painful at first but it did not take long for it to start to feel good. The slow pace was starting to irritate Steve; he wanted Billy to fuck him hard. "Billy, please," he begged him. Billy picked up speed and started to drive his cock with force into Steve's ass, "Is this what you want, pretty boy?" Steve moaned, "Yes, fuck yes." Billy continued pounding his tight ass and Steve screamed with pleasure, "Fuck! Yes! Yes!" Within a few minutes, they were laying in each other's arms, panting with exhaustion.

Billy

After catching their breaths, Steve got up to get some wet paper towels and explained, "My parents will murder me if they find spunk stains on their precious couch." After he cleaned up the mess, Steve sat next to Billy and nuzzled his head into the crook of Billy's neck. Billy wrapped his arms around Steve, feeling absolutely content. "Let's go up to bed," Steve suggested. They went upstairs and got under the covers. Steve settled back into Billy's arms and they were quiet for a while. "Billy, Hawkins is a dangerous place," Steve said sleepily. "I know. I promise I won't tell anybody about us." Half asleep, Steve began to mumble, "It's... it's not just..."

Billy could feel and hear Steve's heavy breathing and though he knew he was sound asleep, he looked down at his face to be certain. Billy wondered what Steve was talking about. He knew that Hawkins was a dangerous place to be gay and that business with the lab was crazy but other than that, Billy couldn't imagine any other dangers. Hawkins seemed like every small Midwestern town – nothing interesting ever happened. Maybe its appearance was deceiving, but Billy was doubtful. Still, Steve's comment was slightly discerning.

At some point, Billy had dosed off too. Billy was a sound sleeper, so it took a great deal to wake him. He awoke to Steve violently shaking him. "Billy, Billy! Somebody is here," he said in a quiet yet harsh whisper. Billy was still trying to make sense of what was happening when they both heard footsteps on the stairs. "Steve, honey, are you

home? The door was unlocked," some unfamiliar female voice called out. "Who is that?" Billy whispered. "Joyce. Go get in the closet, quick!" Steve ushered Billy out of the bed but not quick enough. A woman's figure appeared at the doorway.

"Jesus!" She quickly covered her eyes with her hands. "I'm sorry, I... Steve you weren't answering and... I thought I'd come by to make sure you'd still watch the kids tonight. I didn't realize..." Joyce was babbling. Steve said with more calmness than Billy expected he could muster, "Joyce could you wait downstairs for a minute while I get dressed?" Still closing her eyes, she turned around, "Sure, sweetie. I'm really sorry." She quickly walked away and made her way downstairs.

Billy was still frozen in place, standing stark naked in the middle of Steve's room. Steve tried to get out of bed but Billy could see that his legs were unstable and that he was shaking. He took a deep breath and quickly walked over to Steve, scooping him into his arms. "It will be okay, won't it? I mean, this Joyce, she won't tell, will she?" Billy was crying without realizing it, Steve was still shaking and softly sobbing, "No, I don't think she will. But... but I'll talk to her, make sure." Steve took a deep breath before letting go of Billy to get dressed. After Steve put his clothes on, he nearly walked out the door but then suddenly spun around. He stared at Billy for a moment before quickly walking over to him and kissing him like the world was about to end.

4. Chapter IV: The Compromise

Chapter IV:

The Compromise

Joyce

Joyce had desperately needed a cigarette, so she went out the front but cracked the door so she could see Steve come down the stairs. She was not expecting Steve to be in bed with a girl, let alone a boy. He had been so devastated when he and Nancy had broken up and Joyce expected it would take him a while to move on. Though once he was ready, Joyce had a small hope of Steve and Samantha eventually getting together. After what she had witnessed today, that small hope had completely vanished. She was open-minded but did not know how to process it, so she needed a smoke.

To be fair, she had tried calling Steve and then knocking before she went in. She and Hop had to go to Indianapolis and Jonathon and Nancy were taking a road trip to visit NYU, so she needed someone to look after Will, Jane, and probably the rest of the kids. Karen and Ted Wheeler were on a couple's retreat this weekend so the designated hangout had temporarily switched from the Wheeler's to Joyce's house. Steve was great with the kids, they really looked up to him, and he was usually quite happy to hang out with them.

She looked at her watch; she had to be out of town in 30 minutes to make the appointment. In her peripheral vision, Joyce could see Steve coming down the stairs. She quickly put out her cigarette and stepped back inside the house and tried to give Steve the biggest, reassuring smile that she could. He still looked very nervous in despite of her attempt of making him comfortable, so she went over and hugged him. "Sweetie, it's okay. I'm so sorry, I shouldn't have walked in like that." Steve started to cry and she hugged him tighter, "What you do on your own time... with whomever, that is your own business and yours alone. I will never, never *ever* tell anyone. I promise."

Steve cried a little harder, Joyce assumed they were tears of relief,

and he squeezed her tight, "Thank you." She let him hold onto her for a little longer. Joyce finally held him away from her, "Steve, honey, I know it's not the best time to ask but I have to be in Indianapolis by 2 and I could really use someone to look after the kids." Steve wiped his face, "Shit, I'm sorry I completely forgot Joyce. When do you have to leave?" She quickly glanced at her watch, "To make it on time, I have about 15 minutes to get back to the house to pick up Jim." Steve nodded, "Okay, I'll be over as quick as I can. I just have to..." he looked up the stairs.

"Yeah that's okay, just don't take too long. You know how nervous Hopper gets. Thank you, I really appreciate it Steve... and again, I'm sorry," Joyce said as she walked out the door. She made it home in about 10 minutes and Hopper was waiting for her on the front porch, "Where's that shithhead Steve? He promised you he'd be here." She placed her hands on his chest before kissing him. "It's fine, he just forgot. He's on his way and he will be here in a couple minutes. Don't worry," she soothed him. He let out a sigh, "He better be here or I swear I'll kill him. He knows Jane can't be by herself, not yet."

Jane appeared next to Hopper, "He knows. Everyone knows. He will be here." "Jane! Get inside! How many times do I have to tell you?" Hopper barked in a whisper. "Too many," she said deadpan before turning on her heel and heading back inside. Joyce softly chuckled as Hopper glared at her, "You think that's funny?" He said it serious the first time and then began tickling Joyce and his tone mellowed, "It's funny? Huh? Is it funny now?" She was laughing and finally he started laughing before Joyce told him to stop, "Quit it! We have to go. Steve's on his way, it's all good."

Hopper sighed again, "Okay." Joyce quickly went inside and kissed both Will and Jane goodbye. She and Hopper then both got in Hopper's truck and left. Sure enough, they passed Steve a little ways down the road. Joyce waved but Hopper stared him down with that intensity all fathers, well nearly all fathers, put on when they are worried about their kids. Of course, Lonnie was the exception. He would only give someone that look if they took away his beer. Joyce and Hopper were currently on the way to meet with their lawyer, Lonnie, and Lonnie's lawyer. Lonnie had filed for custody of Will.

Joyce knew that Lonnie was only trying to get custody in order to try

to get a settlement from Hawkins Lab and the U.S. Government. Once he had heard the semi-false news stories about how Will's disappearance and Barbara's death were part of a government cover-up, Lonnie had not stopped calling. He started randomly showing up, pressing Joyce to sue. She refused every time and during his last visit, Lonnie got violent. Joyce called Hopper and he chased Lonnie down before giving him a good beating and throwing him in jail. His girlfriend had bailed him out and a few days later, Lonnie called and said that he found a lawyer and was filing for custody of Will.

The meeting today was supposed to be a mediation, hopefully coming to a compromise. Joyce could not let her baby boy live with his sorry excuse for a father. Even if it meant giving Lonnie what he wanted, Joyce would do anything to make sure that Will stayed with her. Lonnie was nearly completely in the dark about everything that had happened in the past two years. All he knew was that Will had been missing and Joyce had seen a monster in the walls, which of course he didn't believe and then attributed to the "chemical leak" from Hawkins Lab. Lonnie would never be capable of taking care of Will in the way that he needed to be cared for.

The two-hour car ride was mostly silent. Joyce had a lot on her mind and Hopper was mindful of her desire to not talk. "Jim?" "Yeah babe?" "Thank you for coming with me." Hopper looked over at her briefly, "You don't have to thank me Joyce and you'll probably want to take it back if I end up kicking his ass again." Joyce smiled and shook her head, "No, I'll just have to thank you again. Well, as long as you wait to kick his ass when this is all settled and done with." "Don't worry. There is no way in hell that piece of shit is getting Will." Joyce sighed, hoping Hopper was right. Being a mother was the best thing that had ever happened to Joyce. She had already experienced what it felt like to lose one her boys and she couldn't bear to ever feel that again.

Just thinking about losing Will again had her shaking, she pulled out a cigarette to try and calm her nerves. Hopper noticed her nervousness and reached for her free hand. Joyce squeezed it hard and attempted to smile at him. They continued to hold hands and keep their silence until they reached the attorney's office. It was an old crumbling building on the east side, more than likely the cheapest

lawyer Lonnie could find. A positive was that they didn't need to need to pay for parking. Joyce's lawyer was meeting them here, driving down from Lafayette. "You ready?" Hopper asked Joyce. She nodded before taking a final drag on her cigarette and getting out of the car.

Joyce's attorney was already there and he walked with them into the meeting room. Lonnie and his lawyer sat on one side of the table and the three of them sat opposite. They were there for over 2 hours, with a lot of arguing disrupting the negotiations. Joyce put her final offer on the table, "If Will stays with me, I will sue Hawkins Lab. You will get half of what they give us and the other half goes into a college fund for Jonathon and Will. This is the best you will get. Understood?" Lonnie seemed like he was about to argue with her but then shut his mouth before looking to his lawyer. He nodded to the attorney and then looked at Joyce, "We have a deal."

It took another hour of getting the paperwork typed up and to sign all the documents. Once they were back in the car, Joyce let out a huge sigh of relief and began crying. She was not going to lose her boy. Hopper hugged her and told her, "It's over, not all of it, but the rest should be easy." Joyce took a deep breath and nodded in agreement. Hopper started up his truck and began to head back to Hawkins. Joyce could tell that he was starting to get very anxious. He rarely left town and never left the county. Hopper did not feel comfortable being far from Jane and it was no wonder.

After everything that had happened with the lab and with Dr. Owens' help, Hopper thought he and Jane would easily manage keeping her in secret for another year. That was before Jane told him about Brenner still being alive. Hopper knew that man would not rest until he found Jane. The government had shut down Brenner's research but Hopper was certain that would not stop him from coming after Jane. They had not heard anything. Hopper had asked Dr. Owens to keep an eye and ear out, but Hopper was still cautious. He did eventually start to let Jane out of the house, but she had to dress in disguise and hide on the floorboard of his truck.

Hopper knew that neither he nor Jane could handle her being cooped up all the time, so they risked the excursions even though it was dangerous. Joyce had advised Hopper about teenage girls and that

telling them no is irrelevant. So regardless of what Hopper told her to do, Jane was going to do what she wanted. Hopper had not only already experienced Jane's typical teenage rebellious nature but also her fierce anger and rage fueled by her extraordinary abilities. Though he was stubborn and at first refused to give in, Hopper eventually concluded that letting Jane do what she wanted – with supervision – was the best option.

With still an hour drive ahead of them, Hopper unexpectedly sped up. "Jim, what are you doing?" He didn't answer and continued accelerating. "Damn it Hop! Slow down! What is it?" He was sweating, "I... something feels wrong. Something bad is happening, I can feel it. We need to get back." Hopper looked terrified and though Joyce wanted to reassure him, she began to have a bad feeling as well. "Okay hurry, but be careful," she shakily put a cigarette to her lips and lit it. As they neared Hawkins, the sense that something was wrong became overwhelming. Joyce felt like she was going to throw up, "Jim, do you feel that?" He nodded and stepped on the gas.

Steve

After Joyce had left, Steve ran back up the stairs. Billy was lying in bed but when Steve walked into the room, he threw off the covers and stood up revealing that he was naked and had an erection, "Finally, I thought she'd never leave. Come here, I want you right *now*." As tempted as Steve was, he had to decline, "As much as I want to, I can't. I have to go babysit." Billy was not happy, "Babysit? Aren't those kids the same age as Max? I don't think they need a babysitter." Steve sighed, "Yeah but Joyce is overprotective. I'm sorry, I promise to make it up to you."

Billy crossed his arms and pouted. Steve wanted nothing more than to stay in bed with him all day. He gave him a peck on the lips, feeling that Billy was still pouting. "Babe, I'm sorry. Please don't be mad." Billy's mouth turned up into a smile, "Babe? I like that. Okay, go, but I want to see you tonight. Okay?" Steve returned a smile and nodded, "Okay, Joyce should probably be back before 7. So stay here or come by anytime after that." Billy embraced and kissed Steve, who could feel Billy's hard cock against his leg. Steve pushed him away and sighed, "I wish I could stay here with you forever but I have to go." Steve gave Billy a quick kiss on the cheek before leaving.

Steve had passed Hopper and Joyce on the way to the Byers residence. Hopper gave him a glare that could kill and Joyce gave him a wave. God he hoped Joyce would keep her promise to keep his secret. Joyce had seemed very close with Hopper even before they started dating and Steve was worried sick that she would tell him. Jim "Chief" Hopper was grumpy but he was a good guy. However, Steve was unsure what his stance on men sleeping together would be considering that he was the chief of police. Police officers typically leaned far right, especially in Indiana, and conservative republicans despised homosexuals.

While driving, Steve thought about the notion of being gay. He wondered if it was possible to have sex with a guy and not be gay. Steve had always been attracted to girls – the exception was Billy. After considering it for a good couple of minutes, Steve concluded that he wasn't gay – at least not entirely. There was just something about Billy and they had a connection that Steve had never experienced. However, if being gay were a requirement for being with Billy, he would not deny it. *Fuck*, Steve told himself, *I think I'm in love with Billy Hargrove*.

Steve had fallen hard and fast for Nancy and it was the same with Billy. The thought that he was in love with Billy absolutely terrified Steve. When he arrived at the Byers, he had to sit out in his car for a minute before going in. He was shaking and had to get it under control before going inside. Jane couldn't exactly read your mind but she had a way of sensing things. She would be able to tell something was wrong. Steve took several deep breaths before finally feeling steady. He went in the house without knocking and found Will and Jane in the living room.

The two of them were playing a game that they had created. Will would draw something and Jane would try to guess what he was drawing. Steve guessed that she was able to figure it out by listening to the sound of Will's pencil strokes and watching the direction of his hand. Jane was probably right nine times out of ten, usually only being incorrect when it was an object she was unfamiliar with. When she lost, Jane would say "Not fair!" and occasionally she would throw stuff across the room with her mind. It was impressive but she usually made a mess.

The room still looked in order, so Steve assumed that she was on a winning streak. Will stopped drawing and waited for Jane to guess. Steve snuck a quick peak at the drawing. Jane first narrowed her eyes and then closed them in concentration, "A bear... but with long ears?" Will smiled, "Not exactly and it's small." Jane guessed again, "A rabbit?" "Nope, you only have one guess left." She crossed her arms and sighed, "I give up." Will showed her the drawing and explained, "It's a mogwai." Jane scrunched her brows together, "A... mogwai?" Steve rolled his eyes, "It's not real, it's from a movie." Jane looked furious, "Not fair!"

She put out a hand and psychokinetically tossed Will's sketchbook across the room before getting up and locking herself in Will's room. It was tame compared to how she normally reacted to losing. Jane was slowly becoming more accustomed to reigning in her powers, knowing that she needs to control her emotions. Steve sighed before catechizing Will, "Not cool, man. I'm sure you know that she hasn't seen that movie." Will shrugged, "She always wins unless I cheat a little." "So is anyone else coming over today?" Steve asked him. "Yeah, the entire party should be here soon." Steve nodded and then left the living room to check on Jane. He knocked on the door, "Jane, can I come in?" He heard the door unlock and watched it open. Jane was sitting on the bed with her arms crossed.

Steve could tell that Jane was upset so he asked as he sat down next to her, "Are you okay?" She let out an annoyed sigh before answering, "Will thinks I get mad because I lose, but he is wrong." Steve then attempted to get her to elaborate, "So why do you get mad then?" She looked at him and then looked away, "I'm mad because I don't know anything. I know some things but not the right things and not everything." "Jane, it's impossible for one person to know everything. Part of life is always learning something new. Sometimes it's fun, sometimes it can make you mad, and sometimes it's absolutely terrifying."

Steve could feel his voice quavering on the last word. Pretty much everything he had learned the past couple of years had been terrifying. Though the discovery of the Upside Down and its inhabitants had been horrifying, nothing compared to Steve's recent unearthing of his feelings towards Billy. Jane was quiet, which was a

common occurrence, but Steve could tell she was analyzing him. "Steve, learning new things can make you sad too?" It was a rhetorical question; Jane had sensed the pain in Steve's voice. He took a deep intake of breath through his nose.

Jane continued, "Scared, sad, and... happy?" Of course she was able to detect the emotions that Steve was experiencing in regards to Billy. He sighed and looked at Jane, whose features were scrunched up in concentration. "I was scared, sad, and happy at the Snow Ball. How can all these... feelings happen at once?" This time the question was not rhetorical but Steve did not know how to answer. He opened his mouth to make an attempt but before he could get a word out, Mike burst into the room.

He ran up to Jane and hugged her, though they had just seen each other last week. Steve stood up and started to leave the room but told them, "Keep the door open and keep it PG." They both simultaneously gave him a dirty look. Steve laughed as he exited the room and went to say hello to Lucas. He was sitting on the couch talking to Will, "Lucas, how's it going?" "Oh, hey Steve. I was just about to tell Will the latest on the Dustin and Robin saga." Steve waited for a moment but Lucas remained silent, "Well? Let's hear it."

Robin was a girl a year or two older than the kids who had started working at the movie theater. Dustin had developed a crush on her and was trying to work up to asking her out. He did manage to introduce himself and ask her name, though it was on her nametag, and he also made a pun that elicited a smile from Robin. Lucas took a deep breath, "So when we went to see *Back to the Future*, Dustin left his hat at the theater. He went back yesterday to get it and Robin was there. She took him to the lost and found and I guess they started talking. Dustin asked her if she wanted to hang out today and she said yes!"

Steve smiled, "Way to go Dustin!" Lucas continued, "Yeah they should both be here any minute." "Wait, what? He invited her here? To hang out with everyone?" Lucas scrunched his brows together in confusion and nodded. Steve shook his head, "He should have asked her out on a date." The door opened and in walked Dustin, "Guys, I am officially freaking out! I'm not ready, I can't do this! Shit. It's too late. Shit!" He was in obvious distress and Steve tried to calm him down, "Dustin it

will be okay. You've got nothing to worry about. Just be cool." Dustin took some deep breaths and then there was a timid knock at the door.

Dustin eyes widened and Steve whispered, "*Be. Cool,*" as he went to answer the door. He had never met Robin so she was not exactly what he was expecting. She was tall and thin with pin straight blonde hair parted down the middle. Her bright blue eyes were darkly lined with makeup. Right away, Steve could tell she was not one of the popular girls yet she didn't seem to be a nerd either. She looked him over before asking with uncertainty, "Umm, is Dustin here?" He nodded and stepped aside so that she could come in. Robin was still studying Steve as she entered the house.

Dustin greeted her, "Hey, you made it!" Her scrutinizing gaze finally broke from Steve and she smiled at Dustin. "Yeah, though this place wasn't easy to find." "So I know you've seen nearly everyone here but this is Lucas and Will," he gestured towards the couch, "El-Jane and Mike are in the back and this is Steve, the babysitter." Robin looked at Steve before raising an eyebrow and before she could say anything, Dustin continued, "I know what you are thinking, 'Aren't you a little old to have a babysitter?' The answer is yes, but Will and Jane have... overprotective parents, and for good reason. So Steve hangs out with us sometimes, don't worry though he's cool."

Robin looked absolutely amused, "I... I just find it sort of hilarious that the famous Steve Harrington is your 'babysitter'." Dustin frowned, "Oh, so you do know Steve?" Steve examined Robin's face, trying to recall if he'd ever seen her before but he could not remember ever noticing her. She looked away in embarrassment before awkwardly answering Dustin, "No, not exactly. I mean, I've seen him at school and have heard about him." She rapidly tried to get out of the conversation, "Dustin, where is the bathroom?"

After she had shut the bathroom door, Dustin turned to Steve. "What the hell?" Steve shrugged and tried to defend himself, "What? I swear I've never seen her before. It's not my fault that I am popular." Dustin crossed his arms and rolled his eyes, "Okay, who's the asshole I have to blame then?" Steve was just about to respond to the sarcasm when Jane and Mike entered the living room. Mike whispered to Dustin, "Is she here?" A huge grin spread across Dustin's face and he whispered

back, "She's in the bathroom."

Mike hurriedly told Jane, "El, just remember what we've talked about. Try to..." He was interrupted by the return of Robin. She was looking at Jane, "Hi, I don't think we've met?" Jane was about to respond but Mike spoke for her, "No, she's not from Hawkins. She's my – my second cousin from Sweden." Robin lit up, "Oh cool! Sweden is on my list of places I want to visit someday. What's it like?" Before Jane could get a word out, Mike answered, "She hates it." "She doesn't like to talk about it. At all," Lucas tried to help shut down the topic. Robin frowned, "Oh, okay."

They stood around in silence for a minute or two. "So do you guys normally spend all of your time standing around not talking or...?" Robin's question was met with more silence until Steve spoke, "Well this is funny because most of the time they never shut up. Well except for Jane. Dustin, what's the plan?" He was trying to help Dustin become the center of attention. "Uh, well I thought that we could go down to the creek first and then go to the arcade later. Robin said that she's never been and wanted to go." "I didn't bring a swimsuit," Robin mentioned. Dustin smiled, "That's okay, we normally don't go swimming at the creek. We look for animals, we are trying to find a new species." Robin nodded in understanding, "Oh okay, that's good because I hate swimming."

Dustin brightened, "Me too! So is everybody going? Jane?" She was about to speak but Mike, yet again, started to answer for her, "She..." "Mike! I can talk for myself! I am going." Hopper had strictly forbid her from going outside unless he was with her. However, Jane had a mind of her own and would occasionally go outside – with Joyce or Steve's supervision. Steve figured that she sometimes left the house on her own anyway. Steve put his hands together, "Alright, well that's settled. Let's go- oh wait, we are missing someone. Where's Max?"

Lucas piped up, "Billy hasn't been home for two days. So unless he shows up she can't come over." Max didn't have a bike and couldn't ride her skateboard all the way to the Byers' house. Her mother and stepfather were always working, even on the weekends so she had to rely on Billy to get around. Curious and slightly worried, Steve questioned Lucas as they started walking towards the creek, "Is Max's stepdad pissed about Billy?" Lucas scoffed, "He's always pissed but

Max said she wouldn't be surprised if Neil kills Billy this time." Steve could feel his heart begin to race; he really hoped Max was wrong. "Neil is a psychopath." "So is Billy."

Steve had to stop himself from immediately jumping to Billy's defense, "Yeah, I mean what do you expect with someone like Neil as his dad? Isn't he being nicer to Max though?" Lucas nodded, "He's trying but he still gets angry and it scares Max. She said that he doesn't take it out on her anymore but he still yells and punches things." Steve pressed him for more information, "What does he get mad about?" Lucas shrugged, "She doesn't really say but I think it has something to do with me." Steve nodded and was quiet the rest of the way to the creek.

He waded in the creek, mostly thinking to himself, while the others were off looking for signs of wildlife. Steve wondered if part of the reason why Billy had so much rage was because he had to hide who he was. Billy had briefly mentioned that his father would have killed him if he knew the true reason behind the fight that got him expelled back in California. Steve also wondered if Max had any idea of the secret Billy was keeping. He thought that if she knew, she would be able to trust Billy more.

Steve continued thinking to himself and messing around in the creek, looking up every so often to check on the kids. He noticed that Dustin was doing a pretty good job of talking to Robin and keeping her entertained. It made Steve happy to see him doing well. Nancy had told him what had happened at the Snow Ball, how Dustin had been rejected. Later on, Steve had talked to Dustin about it and asked why he didn't tell him. Dustin said that he was embarrassed and didn't think Steve would understand. Steve reminded him about how it ended with Nancy, reassuring Dustin that rejection and heartbreak happens to everyone.

Steve wasn't sure how long they had exploring the creek, but it seemed like a couple of hours had passed. He figured it was a good time to start heading back to the house, especially if they wanted to go to the arcade. "Hey guys, we should probably get back to the house. We've been out here long enough." There were a couple of groans but they complied and began to make their way back. As they neared the house, Steve inquired, "So who's all going to the arcade?"

Jane couldn't go and her disappointment was always obvious. Mike answered him first, "I'm going to stay with Will and El-I mean Jane." His answer elicited a smile from Jane.

Lucas spoke next, "Yeah, I'm going to stay too, in case Max shows. She'd be mad if I went without her." Steve had to stop himself from grinning; Mike and Lucas were being excellent wingmen. "Well I have to stay with Will and Jane but I can drop you two off if you want." Dustin asked Robin, "You rode your bike over here right? We could just ride our bikes there." She quickly shot a glance towards Steve before nodding, "Yeah, we can bike to the arcade." She and Dustin left before the rest of them made it to the front door. Will was about to open the door when Jane grabbed him and whispered, "*Wait.*" Steve was about to ask what was wrong but she beat him to it, "Someone is inside."

5. Chapter V: Family

Chapter V:

Family

Jane

Jane had heard someone talking in the house and after stopping Will from going in, she looked around outside. There were no vehicles besides Joyce and Steve's cars. In fact, everything looked just as it had when they had left. She closed her eyes in concentration and tried to focus on hearing what was being said. Just as Jane became close to determining the words, whoever it was had stopped talking. Though she didn't hear what they said, she had picked up on something. Jane became aware of some sort of connection – one she had felt before.

She cast her fear aside and reached for the door handle. "Stop! Get behind me," Steve pushed her aside with one hand and he held the baseball bat with nails in the other. He must have retrieved it from the trunk of his car while Jane was trying to enter the Void. She started to protest, insist that it wasn't necessary and that it was just her sister, Kali. "Steve it..." "Shh!" Steve interrupted her and opened the door. "Who are you and what are you doing here?" Steve demanded of the unseen intruder. Jane peeked around Steve and saw an unfamiliar teenage girl.

The stranger smiled, "Eleven." Jane quickly glanced at her arm and saw a tattoo bearing the number "005". Before Jane could speak or Steve could react, the girl dematerialized. "What the fuck? What the fuck! Where did she go?" Steve was understandably freaking out. Jane knew that there were others like her but Kali was the only "sibling" that she had been made aware of and that was due to her mother's help. Mama had showed her that Jane and Kali had spent time together in the Rainbow Room but Jane did not remember it. Jane thought that it was possible she had met her other "siblings" but had no memory of it.

Will meekly asked, "What happened?" Steve had dropped the baseball

bat and was nervously running his hands through his hair, "She... some girl just disappeared into thin air. She was here and then she wasn't." Mike walked up to Jane and put a hand on her arm, "El, do you know who she is?" Though everyone else had grown accustomed to calling Jane by her birth name, Mike still called her El. It was the affectionate nickname that he had come up with so she didn't mind when he called her by it now. "No, but she is like me."

Lucas and Will cautiously entered the house. Will closed and locked the door behind him. Lucas rationally suggested to Steve, "Maybe you should check the rest of the house and make sure nobody else is here." He had been pacing back and forth until Lucas said something. Steve stopped, nodded, and picked up the baseball bat before tiptoeing around the house. He checked in every room and did not find anyone. "Nobody is here, not anymore at least," Steve determined and announced to the rest of them. He sat down on the couch and put his head in his hands.

"This is insane! It's – I just can't handle all of this crazy bullshit right now." He sat in complete anguish for a few minutes. Jane knew that he was dealing with something else beyond what had just happened. She couldn't quite sense what he was going through but she assumed it had to do with his love life. Jane was still learning about relationships and love but she had experienced heartbreak and jealousy herself. She could tell that Steve was feeling something different. Jane had seen him and how he had looked at Nancy and Jonathon.

Now, Steve still had a sad look in his eyes but his shoulders were no longer slumped and he had stopped dragging his feet. His back was straight, too straight, and his shoulders were raised and tense. He was anxious, scared. Jane thought that perhaps he had found someone new and was worried that he'd lose her like he did Nancy. Jane remembered how angry and sad she had felt when she saw Max and Mike together and could relate to Steve's emotions. She glanced at Mike and hoped he was different than his sister. A sudden banging at the door caused everyone to jump.

Robin

Robin did not know why she had agreed to hang out with Dustin and

his friends. Her initial thought was that it was out of boredom but then she attributed it to her loneliness and isolation. Robin had a falling out with her friends, well former friends, at the end of the school year. Her best friend's boyfriend had begun flirting with Robin. After rejecting him several times, he forcibly kissed her. She slapped him and told her best friend, Liz, what had happened. Liz confronted her boyfriend, Dan, who lied and said that it was Robin who initiated the kiss. Unfortunately, Liz and the rest of the group took his side and Robin was cast out.

Left with no friends to spend time with over the summer, Robin applied for a job at the theater. Stuck at a boring job, Robin appreciated it when people were kind to her. Dustin was always cheerful and he tried to make Robin laugh. The day he had asked her to hang out, Robin's ex-friends had all showed up at the theater earlier in the day. Liz had called Robin a slut and she spent a good 30 minutes crying in the bathroom. When Dustin arrived, he was immediately able to cheer her up with his chipper attitude and friendly demeanor.

While they had walked to the back office, where the lost and found box was located, Dustin asked Robin, "So do you like working here? I mean you probably get to see movies for free right?" "We get discount tickets but I haven't bought any. It's mostly pretty boring." Dustin frowned, "Oh. So what do you do for fun? Like when you are not working." It was Robin's turn to frown, "Well, I've sort of been bored all summer." She used to hang out with her friends, doing random or stupid things, but it was fun. However, Robin had not been ready to discuss the falling out she had with her group of friends. Dustin was nice but she hadn't known him well enough to be talking about her social problems.

Dustin had kept silent for several seconds and then finally stammered out a response, "Umm... Well i-if you ever wanted to, you could hang out with my friends and me. We mostly bike around town and play games, either at someone's house or at the arcade." Robin thought about it for a moment before answering, "I don't have to work tomorrow so I could hang out, I've never been to the arcade." Dustin's eyes had lit up, "Oh okay, yeah! We were going to meet up at my friend, Will's house at 12." Dustin had then given Robin directions

and she told him she'd meet them there.

Robin had definitely not been expecting Steve Harrington to answer the door. She was just a freshman so of course he probably hadn't noticed her at school. She had awkwardly asked if Dustin was there. Robin had nearly laughed out loud when it was explained that Steve was their babysitter. From what little she had known about Steve, it seemed like the least likely situation imaginable. In all honesty, Robin did not know very much about Steve. She knew that he was popular, or at least he had been. Dan, Liz's boyfriend, was a junior and mentioned Steve was more popular before dating Nancy Wheeler.

The news that Steve and Miss Perfect had broken up eventually reached Robin and her friends. Just a week or two later, Nancy had been walking in the hallway and holding hands with Jonathon Byers. Robin had noticed Steve was pretty much despondent the remainder of the school year. She couldn't understand how he was able to continue being friends with both Nancy and Jonathon. She thought that perhaps that was why he looked miserable all of the time. However, even melancholy could not take away from Steve's attractiveness.

Robin knew that someone like Steve Harrington would never even notice her let alone want to date her. However, that did not stop her from having a major crush on him. For some reason, she never told Liz about it. Steve was not the typical guy that Robin and her friends would go for. He was athletic, popular, and liked all of the music and other stuff that they hated. Robin thought that perhaps Liz would judge her for her crush and even laugh at her. Therefore, Robin kept it a secret.

Seeing and actually speaking to Steve was unnerving. He looked better than he had in months and she hadn't been able to stop looking at him. While they were at the creek, she could tell he had been deep in thought. His facial expressions had greatly varied, from scowls to smiles. He had looked up now and then to check on everyone and then resumed his contemplation. *God he is beautiful*, Robin thought to herself as she had watched him.

When it was just she and Dustin at the arcade, Robin began to ask

him a number of questions about Steve. She could tell that Dustin was starting to get annoyed, "I'm sorry Dustin, I know I'm asking a bunch of questions. I-I was just curious." He smiled, "No, it's okay." After a few minutes, Robin noticed him frowning. She could tell that Dustin liked her, it was very obvious. He was really nice and funny but Robin didn't like him beyond a friend. She could tell that her questions about Steve were upsetting him and she didn't want to hurt Dustin's feelings. Robin figured it was better if she stopped inquiring about Steve.

There was a long period of awkward silence between the two of them as Robin watched Dustin play a game. After he won, he asked if Robin wanted to try. "Oh, uh I don't know. I don't think I will be any good at it." Dustin urged her, "Come on, you should at least try." Robin sighed, "Okay, but you have to swear to not make fun of me if I'm bad at it." "I promise," Dustin smiled. She took over the controls and stuck out her tongue in concentration. Robin played the game just as she had watched Dustin. To her surprise, she won the game.

Robin jumped up and down, "I won! I won!" She laughed, "Wow, I didn't realize how fun this was." Dustin smiled from ear to ear, "You should come here more often." Robin was about to agree when she saw a familiar face; it was Dan and his friends. She turned and tried hiding from him. Robin asked Dustin in a low voice, "This has been really fun but can we get out of here?" "Oh, okay. Sure." "Robin? Is that you?" She shut her eyes tightly and hoped she was imagining it.

Dan grabbed her shoulder and pulled her around to face him. "I thought I recognized your hair," he said as he took a strand of her hair and rubbed it between thumb and forefinger. She knocked his hand away. Dan laughed, "What's the matter Robbie? Haven't you missed me?" Robin scoffed, "Yeah, right. Why don't you do me a favor and fuck off?" He grabbed her around the waist and whispered in her ear, "How about we just get it over with and fuck each other?" She shoved him away.

Dustin spoke up, "Hey man, leave the lady alone. Just walk away." Dan and his friends laughed, "Or what?" "I - I'll get Steve Harrington to kick your ass!" Dan laughed some more, "Like you know Steve Harrington anyway, nerd." Dustin stuck his chest out, "I do, he's my friend. Just wait you assholes, he will fuck your shit up." Dan turned

to his friends and laughed but ended up walking away. Robin sighed in relief, "Thank you, Dustin." "Don't worry about it, let's get out of here."

Billy

The Byers' door opened and Steve nearly swung at him with a baseball bat that had nails driven through it. Suddenly, Billy had a flashback to the night he fought Steve. Max had threatened him with that same bat. "Harrington! What the fuck, man?" Steve immediately lowered the bat, "Bi – Hargrove, what are you doing here?" Billy smiled and ran his tongue across his teeth, "Dropping Max off, she's in the car. I wanted to speak to Lucas first, in private." Steve raised one of his dark brows, "Why?"

Billy pushed Steve aside and walked into the house, "Lucas, I want to have a chat with you. Alone." Lucas just stared at him blankly until finally Billy groaned, "Now, Lucas." Billy started to walk towards the back and found an empty room and waited for Lucas to follow. Once he entered the room, Billy closed the door behind him. "Lucas, first off I want to apologize. I assume Max told you what happened in San Francisco?" Lucas nodded and Billy continued, "Well regardless of that, there's no excuse for how I treated you. I'm truly and very sorry."

Lucas blinked his eyes rapidly but did not talk. Billy took a deep breath, what he was going to say next was difficult, "I support you and Max being friends, more than friends, but you need to listen to me. You have to be careful. My father cannot see you two together, ever. Not even as friends. He... nearly killed me for getting in fight for sticking up for a black guy." Lucas stared at Billy with wide eyes and nodded. Billy inhaled shakily, he'd never told anyone this before, "My asshole of a father used to beat my mother. Sh – she died in a car accident. If my father lays a hand on Max, first I will kill him and then I will kill you. Understand?"

Lucas visibly gulped, "I understand. I promise, *I swear* to be careful." Billy patted him on the shoulder before exiting the bedroom. Everyone else was standing around, just the same as they were when Billy first arrived. Something had happened to make them so jumpy. "What is up with you nerds?" He asked no one in particular. Near the

center of the room, he noticed a strange girl he'd never seen before. Not receiving an answer, Billy scooted around Steve and left the house. He made sure not to make eye contact with Steve, he didn't know if he'd be able to control himself.

He went over to Max and spoke to her through the open passenger window of his Camaro, "Everything is sorted. Go on in." Max rolled her eyes, "You know Billy, sometimes I think that I liked you better when you were an asshole. You are starting to remind me of my mom." She opened the car door and stormed through the yard, up the steps, and through the front door. Instead of immediately leaving, an odd feeling made Billy stay behind. He did not want to go back into the house, so he leaned against the hood of his car.

After a few minutes passed, Steve emerged from the Byers' house. He silently came up beside Billy and mimicked his pose. Billy took a deep breath and tried to not reach for Steve's hand. To get his mind off of it, Billy asked Steve, "So what was the deal with the bat?" He leaned his head back and slowly looked at Billy, "Hmm?" "The baseball bat. Who were you expecting to be at the door?" Steve cleared his throat, "Uh, well it's a long story." Billy nodded, "You should tell me some time." He looked around cautiously and leaned in close to Steve.

"I missed you," he whispered. Steve immediately blushed, "It's only been a couple of hours." Billy slowly inched his hand towards Steve's, "So? You haven't missed me?" Steve looked over at him and sighed, "Well, yeah I missed you." Billy grinned and continued inching his hand closer, "God, do you even realize how sexy you are?" Steve turned bright red, "Shut up." Finally, Steve's hand was in reach. Billy lightly stroked Steve's pinkie with his own, "I wish I could fuck you on this hood, *right now*."

Steve cracked a small smile before attempting to keep a straight face, "I wish you could too. Though I can't imagine what all the kids would think of it." Billy laughed, "Yeah I think Max would have a stroke. I've already embarrassed her enough today." Steve laughed in return, "Oh yeah? Due to the 'talk' you had with Lucas?" Billy nodded, "I just wanted to apologize to him, formally, and caution him against... getting caught with Max by my father." Steve scrunched his brows together and ran a hand through his hair, "Oh, what would happen if

they were caught?"

"Umm, I'm not sure but nothing good. I – I'm worried that he would beat Max for it. He can hit me all that he wants but I don't know what I'd do if he hits her." He took a breath and continued, "He... used to hit my mom. It was usually after she tried to protect me from him. Eventually, she stopped getting in the way but... I think it messed her up to watch and not be able to do anything about it." Billy could feel himself tearing up and bit his lip to quell his emotions, "I th – I think she killed herself. Her car drove off the road and into a tree. They called it an accident but there were no skid marks and she hadn't been drinking or on drugs."

Billy was shaking; he had never said the words out loud before. Now that he was telling Steve, it made it seem even more likely that it was true that his mother had committed suicide. Steve grabbed his hand and squeezed it, "I'm so sorry Billy. I wish I could hold you right now but..." Billy pulled his hand away and brushed a tear off of his face, "It's okay." It really wasn't okay but there was nothing to be done about it. A scream pierced the air; it was coming from inside the house. Billy recognized it as Max's and sprinted towards the sound.

6. Chapter VI: Showdown

Chapter VI:

Showdown

Steve

Billy had been divulging deep secrets and showing a vulnerable side, that few or perhaps nobody else had witnessed, before Max screamed. Steve wanted so badly to wrap Billy in his arms after he had talked about his mother. He was afraid that one of the kids would see them, holding Billy's hand was risky as well but Steve knew he needed to do something. Billy had pulled away quickly and gave a gruff reply, a reaction that Steve was uncertain what to make of. He thought that perhaps Billy had been embarrassed of his own emotions.

After Max's shrill shriek had interrupted them, Billy raced towards the house with Steve following. Steve was expecting the mysterious disappearing girl but was surprised at the true cause of Max's scream. There was a snake in the kitchen. Billy picked up the baseball bat and walked towards the small snake. Steve grabbed a hold of his shirt, "What?" Steve explained, "It's just a harmless garter snake." Steve then went over and picked up the reptile. Billy took several steps back and the look of disgust on his face resulted in Steve laughing.

"What's the matter? Didn't they have snakes in California?" he asked both Billy and Max. "Yeah, but we never had any *in the house*," Max spoke with wide eyes. Steve jokingly waved it towards her, eliciting another scream. Billy warned him, "Hey, man." Steve put his free hand up in defense, "Alright, I'm going to put it outside." He promptly walked out the open door and took the frightened creature outside before placing it on the ground and watching it slither away. Steve looked up and saw four people looking at him, one of which was the disappearing girl. Before he had a chance to react, Steve felt an intense amount of pain before losing consciousness.

When he awoke, Steve was in the passenger seat of Billy's Camaro. It took a few moments for him to acknowledge his surroundings and

make sense of it all. Someone moaning and crying out in pain from the back seat had been what finally roused Steve. He looked to the back seat and saw Billy writhing in pain in the back seat. He looked over at the driver seat and observed that Max driving and it was still just as unsettling as the last time. She was crying but doing a good job of focusing on the road, so Steve avoided distracting her. Though he desperately wanted to ask her what had happened, Steve kept his mouth shut.

After about 10 minutes of driving, they made it to the hospital. Max jumped out of the car and yelled for help. Three hospital employees came out to their assistance, with two of them seeing to Billy and one of them asked Steve if he needed emergency care. "No, I'm okay. I was unconscious but now I'm fine. Just help him." Steve turned and watched as the staff tried to carefully get Billy out of the car. They were asking about his injuries and Max was rapidly answering, with what Steve assumed were lies. "He has a bunch of broken bones. He fell off of a roof."

One of the employees asked, "What about you? Why were you unconscious?" Steve quickly came up with a response, "Umm, I guess I fainted. You know, after seeing him like that." The hospital staff member briefly nodded before turning his focus back on Billy. They were somehow able to get a stretcher into the backseat of the Camaro and get it out with Billy on it. Max started to follow them and Steve was about to exit the car and do the same. However, Max instructively yelled, "Steve, park the car." Though he was reluctant and did not want to leave Billy's side, he figured he should do as she commanded.

Steve was still a little off balance but was able to make his way to the driver side of the car. He was able to find a parking spot close to the door before he rushed inside the hospital. He looked around the emergency room and did not see Billy or Max. "Hey, ma'am, where did they take Billy Hargrove?" he asked the lady at the desk. "Sorry hun, I don't have anyone on my list by that name." Steve sighed in exasperation, "The guy that just came in with a lot of broken bones?" "Oh! He's in – actually only family members are permitted to see him."

"I'm his brother," Steve blurted out. The desk attendant looked him

over with questionable doubt, "Hmm... I d –" "I'm his step-brother, can I please see him?" She squinted her eyes and twisted her mouth in concentration, "I don't see why not. He's in Surgery Room 03, down the hall on the right." "Thank you," Steve said hastily before sprinting in the direction he was given. Billy had been given a sedative and several doctors and nurses were standing over him. Max looked on as she softly sobbed. Steve hugged her tightly, "He's going to be okay." He wasn't sure if he was trying to reassure Max or himself.

"They said he has a ruptured spleen and they have to remove it," she said quietly in between sobs. A few minutes later, a nurse ushered Max and Steve out of the room and into the hallway. There was a window but the same nurse closed the blinds. "Bitch," Steve said under his breath but Max caught it. A small smile crept upon her lips despite her tears, "Right?" The smile quickly faded but it helped Steve to relax a little.

Steve held Max's hand as they sat in the chairs outside of Billy's room. After several minutes, Steve finally mustered enough courage to ask Max, "I know it might be hard to talk about and you don't have to tell me right now... but I have to ask, what happened?" Max looked around and made sure no one was in earshot, "They had powers, like Jane. One of them was able to make you pass out. Billy grabbed the bat and started to go after him. Another one, she broke Billy's arm holding the bat. But Billy being Billy, that just pissed him off more."

She paused as a nurse passed them. Once she was out of sight, Max continued, "So Billy managed to get a hold of the guy that made you faint and was choking him with his good arm. Then... that girl, she must have broke most if not all of Billy's ribs. Thankfully, Jane stepped in and threw an old tire at her before she could hurt anybody else. Jane fought with the other two, one was a huge dude but he didn't use any powers. Jane was able to knock him down but the last one wasn't even there! She was like a ghost or hologram or something, everything Jane threw at her went right through."

Before she could say anything else, a woman, who did not have scrubs on but was wearing a hospital employee badge, walked up to them. "Hello, my name is Sandra and I'm with the hospital. I need to

ask you some questions about your brother so that he can properly be admitted." Max's eyes quickly flashed towards Steve and then back at Sandra, "Okay, technically he's my stepbrother though. What do you need to know?"

"What is your brother's full name and date of birth?" "William Herbert Hargrove. I know his birthday is July 1st and he just turned 18 so that would make his birth year... 1967? Yeah July 1st, 1967." Steve had to stop himself from grinning when he heard what Billy's middle name was. Sandra quickly scribbled in her notepad, "Thank you so much sweetie, do you know his social security number by chance?" Max shook her head. "That's okay, can I get your telephone number so I can speak to your parents?"

Max appeared uncertain but gave Sandra the number. "Great, I'll give them a call here soon. I have one more question for you though. Could you tell me everything about what happened to William and where it occurred? For insurance purposes," the high-pitched tone of Sandra's voice was starting to really irritate Steve. Max thought it through, probably rehearsing the lies in her head, before responding, "He fell off of a roof but that's all he managed to say. He was in too much pain. One of his friends dropped him off in the front yard and took off."

Sandra seemed dissatisfied but nodded, "Okay, I see. Thank you so much for the information." She shook both Max and Steve's hands before walking away. Steve glanced at Max and noticed her eyes were filling with tears again. When she and Steve made eye contact she asked, "Do you think he is going to die? Is that why she was asking those questions?" Steve grabbed her hand, "Billy is going to be okay. They always ask stuff like that, it's totally normal." He wasn't sure if that was true but he didn't want to worry Max.

She let out a sigh of relief but Steve was still worried sick. Earlier, he had barely been able to look at Billy's unconscious face on the operating table out of fear of becoming emotional in Max's presence. Now, Steve regretted that decision and thought it may have been the last time he would have seen Billy alive. Steve tried to push that terrible thought aside, but it was too late. Before he could do anything to stop it, he started to cry. Steve hoped Max would not see his tears but he could not wipe them away inconspicuously, so he let

them cascade down his cheeks.

Steve could not understand what had come over him these past couple of weeks – months really. He had always been sensitive, though he fought hard to keep that aspect of himself hidden from others. Instead, Steve used humor or feigned ignorance to mask his true feelings. Even when he was upset, it usually manifested itself as anger or Steve ran away from the problem. Now, Steve was crying all of the time. He wasn't ashamed of his tears, but right now, in front of Max, he was worried that she would be able to interpret the reasoning behind them.

Luckily, there was a distraction that gave Steve a moment to wipe the tears off his face. A man was yelling down the hallway, near the entrance to the emergency ward. "I want to see my son, now!" There was a slight pause before he continued, "Billy Hargrove, William Herbert Hargrove! Where is he?" Max's eyes were wide with fear and she quickly whispered to Steve, "This is bad, really bad. He was pissed at Billy already so..." Neil Hargrove came into view, stomping down the hallway towards them with Susan following.

"Maxine, is Billy in there? If he's not dead already, I'm going to kill that bastard. First, he doesn't come home for two days and now the piece of shit is in the hospital." Max started crying, not knowing what to do or say. Neil grabbed her arm, hard. "Are you deaf? Answer me!" She was terrified and sobbing. He squeezed her arm harder and she yelped. Susan placed a hand on Neil's shoulder and pleaded, "Neil, you are hurting her. Please let her go."

He dropped Max's arm and then suddenly turned, smacking Susan across the face with the same hand that previously had a grip on Max. "No one tells me what to do!" Steve stood up and tried to get in between the two of them, "Not cool, man. I think you need to calm down." Neil poked him in the chest, "And I think you need to get out of my way, faggot." His breath reeked of alcohol. Steve stood his ground, "The name-calling is not necessary. Billy is in surgery and it is possible he does not make it. Is this really how you want to act right now?"

Neil stared him down with a cold look in his eyes, the same cold blue gaze that Billy had given Steve once before. "Who are you to tell me

how I should act? This is my family, my business." He pushed past Steve and burst through the door to Billy's room. One of the nurses told Neil, "Sir, I'm sorry but you can't be in here right now. You will have to wait outside." "He's my son, I have every right to be in here!" Neil furiously yelled at the nurse. She looked frightened but was persistent, "I understand but it will be better if you remained in the hall until we finish the procedure."

He sighed, "Fine, but can you at least tell me if he's going to live?" The nurse gave a brief smile, "Sir, your son will be okay. Your daughter had said he had broken bones but we were unable to locate any recent breaks. The only major trauma was to his spleen, which they are removing now." Neil gave a small nod before leaving the room. He turned towards Susan who had her arms around Max. "Susan, go home and take Maxine with you." They began to walk away but Neil shouted, "Wait! Maxine come here!"

She turned around, looking terrified. She hesitated for a moment but then took a deep breath and slowly approached Neil. "Max, tell me exactly what happened." She immediately became flustered, "Uh... I'm sorry, I – I don't know. He said... he fell off a roof and someone left him in the front yard." Neil stared at her for a couple of seconds before grabbing her arm again. "I know you are lying! Tell me the truth, I know you know! Where has he been and what happened?" She tried to pull away from him and yelled, "Let go of me! I don't know anything asshole!"

With that final word, Max's eyes grew large as she realized she had made a mistake. Neil hit her across the face, hard enough to throw her off her feet. Susan let out a small cry of distress. Neil stood over Max and told her, "Not only are you a liar, you are a disrespectful little bitch. Get up and apologize, now!" Steve had been in shock but as soon as he saw Max's bloodied lip, he was moved into action. He shoved Neil as far as he could away from Max, "Get the fuck out of here, you abusive piece of shit." He smiled that same devilish grin that his son constantly wore.

"I'll ask you one more time, who are you?" Steve looked at Max as she made her way over to her mother, "Max's... and Billy's friend." Neil scoffed, "The same friend that left my son in the front yard?" "No." "And do you know where he's been for two days?" Steve tried to think

of a careful response, "I –" Neil interrupted him, "No, wait. I already know that he's been staying with you." He smiled wide as he leaned in close to Steve's face before whispering, "You've been fucking him, haven't you faggot?" Steve angrily pushed him away.

Neil laughed, "I'm going home but be sure to tell Billy that I'm going to kill him. Though, maybe he will save me the trouble and die in surgery." Steve reacted, without thinking, and punched Neil in the face. "You get off on being an asshole, don't you?" Neil touched his cheekbone where the force of Steve's blow had split the skin. He laughed maniacally and momentarily glared at Steve before grabbing him by the shoulders and throwing him to the ground. Neil sat on top of Steve, effectively pinning him to the ground as he threw punch after punch.

Max and her mother were both screaming, begging Neil to stop. He didn't listen and continued to hit Steve. Neil was a large and powerful man and each blow did significant damage. After only three or four hits to the face, Steve began to lose consciousness. He heard Max's screams and the muffled sounds of footsteps approaching. Neil was able to get a couple more punches in before Steve could feel the removal of Neil's weight and then everything went black.

Billy

Though he was still hurting when he awoke, Billy was in considerably less pain than he had been on the way to the hospital. The doctors told him that they removed his spleen but when he asked about his broken bones, he was surprised at their response. Billy was told that he did not have any fractures. That witch, whatever she was, must have broken and then healed the bones. Billy had been in shock from the excruciating experience and must have not felt the repair of the fractures. Thinking about the events that occurred before he ended up in the hospital was driving Billy crazy. He just could not wrap his head around it all.

With no visitors for two days, Billy had a lot of time to reflect on everything. He figured his father wouldn't show but he couldn't fathom the reason why Max or Steve didn't stop by to see him. Billy tried to tell himself that Steve was just being careful and that Max didn't have a ride but his mind always circled back around to

thinking that nobody actually cared about him. He was also feeling left out, sensing that Steve, Max, and everyone else that was at the Byers' house knew about that strange girl and the other people with powers.

On the third day, after Billy received several vaccines, he was allowed to stand up and walk around his room. While up and about, he finally had a visitor, though it was not anyone he had been expecting. It was Susan, "Hello Billy, how are you feeling?" "I'm okay, I should be out of here in a day or two." She nodded but looked solemn, "There's something I need to tell you." Billy noticed a bruise across her cheek and immediately knew his father was responsible, "What happened?" Susan sat down and nervously played with her hands, drawing Billy's gaze.

Her wedding ring was absent from the left hand. "When your father and I received the call notifying us that you were in the hospital, we headed here straight away. Neil had been drinking and seemed angry, though I thought it was just his way of worrying about you." Billy scoffed but Susan kept talking, "But when we got here, he started screaming at the hospital staff and then at Maxine. And then... he was hurting her. I asked him to stop b – but he hit me." She took a deep shaky breath, "Your friend, Steve? He stood between us and tried to prevent things from escalating, which worked for a moment."

"Neil then went into your room and demanded answers from the doctors and nurses attending you. After hearing what they had to say, he asked Maxine what had happened. She told him what she knew but – but Neil wasn't satisfied. He called her a liar and then she called him an a-hole. Then..." Susan began tearing up and pulled a tissue from her purse before continuing with a quiver in her voice, "Then Neil called her a bad name and hit Maxine. He hit my daughter!" She sobbed and blew her nose into the tissue. Billy grew hot with the rage boiling under his skin.

After Susan gathered up some composure, she resumed telling Billy everything that had happened. When he heard that his father had beaten Steve, Billy felt sick and had to sit down. Susan then explained that Neil was arrested and while he was in jail, she and Max packed up several belongings. Susan left behind her ring and a

note for Neil, demanding a divorce. Billy finally spoke, "Is Max okay?" Susan nodded, "Her lip bled for a little while and though she still has a fat lip, I think she will be alright besides being shaken up about the whole thing."

"The next time I see my father, I'm going to kill him. He's hurt enough people, someone has to stop him." Susan stood up and walked over to Billy and placed a hand on his shoulder, "Billy, he's done some terrible things but it is not your responsibility to stop him. You cannot kill your father." He shrugged her hand away, "I can and I will." Susan sighed, "I should have realized, I should have done something when he would hit you. I didn't agree with it but I thought it wasn't my place to interfere with him disciplining his son. I was wrong, I'm so sorry Billy."

"Please don't apologize for that, it was better for you that you didn't do or say anything. My mother... she used to try to stop him and it just made it worse for the both of us. She learned the lesson and stopped trying to protect me but... I think it destroyed her. I don't think her death was an accident. I think she killed herself because she couldn't handle it any longer. She's dead because of my father. I should be apologizing to you, I should have warned you. I was worried for you and Max but yet I said nothing. I fucking knew something like this would happen! But Steve..."

Billy put his head in his hands, "This is all my fault. I could have stopped him; I should have stopped him a long time ago. I don't care what happens to me but I can't let him hurt anyone else." He looked up at Susan, "How is Steve? Do you know where he is?" "I'm sorry, I don't know," she then put a finger to her chin in concentration. "I'll ask the front desk for you, maybe they will know?" she suggested with a shrug. Billy nodded, "That'd be great, could you ask them something else for me too?" "Of course." "Could you ask them to give me my clothes and stuff back? They aren't letting me leave for a couple days but I'm dying for a cigarette." Susan gave him a scolding stare but nodded, "Okay, but only if you promise not to do anything stupid. Like trying to kill your father."

Billy rolled his eyes, "Fine, I promise." Susan began to walk towards the door but stopped halfway before turning around, "None of this is your fault Billy, do you hear me?" He nodded, though he didn't have

any conviction in her words, before Susan turned back around and left his room. It seemed like an eternity had passed though in actuality it had only been about 10 minutes before she returned. Billy's belongings were in her hands and she relayed the information she received from the front desk, "Steve was here the night afterwards but they had a police officer with him in his room. The next day, Chief Hopper picked him up and he was told by hospital staff that he could not return."

Susan handed Billy's belongings to him as he asked, "Could you do me one more favor and get Hopper's number for me?" Susan smiled and retrieved a piece of paper from her purse and gave it to Billy. He smiled back, "Thank you Susan. Not just for this, but everything. You deserve so much better than my father." "So do you Billy. Max and I, we packed a couple of your things as well and you are welcome to stay with us at my friend's house when you get out." Susan's kind words and thoughts were nearly too much for him to deal with at the moment and he choked up a little bit, "Thank you."

Billy hoped that he would be able to stay with Steve but he was very appreciative of Susan's generous offer and didn't want to spoil the moment by mentioning the option. She hugged him and told him goodbye and promised to bring Max by to see him tomorrow. After she had left, Billy immediately called Hopper. Thankfully, he picked up, "Hello?" "Hi, is this Jim Hopper, Chief of Police?" "Yes. Is this an emergency? If so call –" "No, I'm looking for Steve Harrington." "Who is this?" "Billy Hargrove."

There was a brief silence on the other end of the line, "Oh, okay. He's here, do you want to talk to him?" "Yes, please." "Steve!" Hopper yelled, "Phone!" After waiting for a minute, Steve spoke into the receiver, "Hello? Who's this?" "It's Billy. Steve, are you okay? I just heard what happened." Steve sighed and whispered, "I'm okay, better now that I'm talking to you. I've missed you babe. How are you?" Billy smiled, "I'm okay, I'll be out of here in a couple days. I've missed you too, though I thought I had done something wrong because you hadn't been here to see me."

"No! Of course not –" "No, it's okay. I know they wouldn't let you. Susan told me *everything*." "Who's Susan?" Steve asked, sounding a little jealous. "Max's mom." "Oh, right. Your dad is a real piece of

work." He brought his voice down to a whisper again, "He called me a faggot and asked if... I've fucked you." Billy's throat suddenly went dry, "Wh – What did you say?" "Nothing! But I pushed him away and he laughed. Then he said he was going to kill you if you didn't die at the hospital and I made the mistake of hitting him."

"He's a fucking psycho, I guess that's where I get it from. I'm going to kill him first Steve, for what he did to you and Max." "You are nothing like him Billy. He deserves a lot of things but promise me that you won't do anything stupid." Billy rolled his eyes, annoyed that Steve and Susan asked him to promise the same thing. Steve said quietly, "I don't want to lose you because of that asshole. Promise me." "Ugh, fine. I promise. Hopefully, the bastard rots in jail for a while anyway. I should be out of the hospital in two days, can I stay with you?"

"I've been staying at the Byers' house since I got out of the hospital, Joyce insisted. But... I was planning on going home tomorrow and I would love to have you stay with me. I have your car and can pick you up when they release you, just call me. Do you have a pen and paper?" Billy quickly looked around and was able to locate the materials, "Yeah, what's your number?"

Steve listed the phone number as Billy quickly scribbled it down. Billy then read it back to make sure he had the correct digits. He wanted to speak to Steve longer but a nurse entered the room and told him that she needed to test his vitals. "I have to go but I'll call you. Bye." Steve whispered, "Bye, babe. See you soon." Billy heard the click of Steve hanging up and put the phone back on the hook before begrudgingly letting the nurse do her job.

7. Chapter VII: Wayward Son

Chapter VII:

Wayward Son

Joyce

When Joyce and Hopper had arrived back at the house, the kids were in front of the house. Mike had been standing over an unconscious Steve and Max was trying to comfort her stepbrother who was writhing on the ground and crying out in pain. Joyce had jumped out of the car and ran up to Will, checking him over and asking him, "Will, are you okay? What happened?" Hopper had been looking over Jane as well when Will, Lucas, and Mike all chimed in at once. They had been talking so fast and at the same time, making it impossible to understand what they were saying.

Hopper had interrupted them, "One at a time!" You," he pointed to Mike, "What happened?" "So we were just hanging out and there was a snake in the house, Steve took it outside and then these kids showed up! They were like Eleven, they had powers. One made Steve pass out and another started breaking Billy's bones. With her mind! One of them didn't have a power and the other was able to astral project or something, she wasn't actually here. And then... this white van came and they jumped in and left. Well the one girl just disappeared."

Hopper had simply nodded before rushing back towards the truck. "Jim, wh – " "Watch after the kids, I'm going to try to chase them down." Hopper had taken off and left Joyce standing in her front yard with two injured teenagers to take care of. She hadn't wanted to leave any of the kids behind, so she reluctantly agreed to Max driving Steve and Billy to the hospital. Joyce had figured Steve would be fine once he regained consciousness but thought that perhaps he would like to be there with Billy. With all of the kids' help, especially Jane and her abilities, they had been able to get both Steve and Billy into the Camaro.

When Hopper had returned, he told Joyce that there was no sign of

the van or of the children like Jane. Hopper tried to get every single detail from all of the kids but he hounded Jane especially hard. He had asked, "Do you think Brenner is behind it?" Joyce had been confused, "Dr. Brenner? I thought he was dead." Jane spoke before Hopper had the chance, "There is something that I have to tell you, all of you." Up until this point, Jane had not told anyone about Kali so she proceeded to explain all that had happened when she left last fall. This information included how she had learned that Brenner was still alive.

"So it is safe to assume Brenner was behind today's incident?" Hopper had asked after she finished. "Probably," Jane had sighed. Instead of Hopper taking Jane back out to the cabin, he had decided to stay with Joyce. With Brenner aware that Jane was here in Hawkins, Hopper figured that no more harm could be done with them staying in town. It also allowed Hopper to be able to protect Joyce and Will more effectively. After they had finished discussing everything and sent Mike and Lucas home, Hopper was dispatched over his police radio to see to an altercation at the hospital.

Joyce had learned later, after Hopper returned to the house well after midnight, that Billy's father had beaten up Steve. Hopper had arrested Neil Hargrove but the hospital also held Steve responsible and after a night's stay, he was not allowed to return. Joyce had convinced Hopper to pick up Steve and have him stay at her house until he was completely recovered. He had told everyone what had happened but Joyce could tell that he was leaving something out. Once she had a moment alone with Steve, she asked what it was.

He told Joyce that he wasn't sure if Neil actually knew but that he had said something about Steve having sex with Billy. They talked it over together and Joyce had tried to convince him that Neil was probably just saying it as an insult without actually believing Steve or Billy were gay. Though she had thought there was a possibility that Neil did know, Joyce explained to Steve that it was probably a very small chance. Steve attempted to hide his worry for Billy from everyone else apart from Joyce.

She shared a mutual friend with Susan Hargrove, Lisa Moore, who was letting Susan and Max stay with her. The day after Steve had started staying with Joyce, she gave Lisa a call and asked after Billy.

Though Susan hadn't visited the hospital yet, she had contacted the hospital and checked in on Billy. When Joyce had told Steve that Billy was doing great and would be released soon, he smiled and let out a sigh of relief. The next day, Billy had called the house. While Steve spoke to him, Hopper had questioned Joyce, "What is that about?" "What?" "Steve and Hargrove."

"Oh that. I guess they're friends." Hopper appeared perplexed, "It is the same kid that beat up Steve, right?" Joyce nodded, "Well, you know how boys are. They tend to work things out with their fists instead of their words." Hopper raised an eyebrow but shrugged and slightly changed the topic, "Neil Hargrove is a real piece of work. I'm wondering if the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." "You know, Neil reminds me of someone. Billy too." His eyes darkened and he crossed his arms but didn't take the bait. Joyce copied him and stared him down with an omniscient gaze.

"Fine, I'll humor you. Who do they remind you of?" Hopper asked mockingly, already knowing the answer. "Don't give me that crap. You know that I am talking about your father and you." Hopper rolled his eyes, "Just because we have assholes for fathers doesn't mean we share any other similarities." "Hmm, let's see: you were an angry, troubled teenager, constantly got into fights, and your father was abusive," Joyce ticked off the comparisons on her fingers. "So? It still doesn't mean anything." Joyce sighed, "Maybe not, but give the kid a chance. If Steve likes him, he can't be all that bad." He snorted, "I don't know about that. Steve did fuck up the other day, who's to say that this isn't another mistake."

Joyce stared at Hopper with disappointment in her eyes before remarking, "You cannot blame him, Jim. If he could have done anything, you know he would have." He frowned and paused for a moment before adding, "No, I know it's not his fault. It's just easier to blame someone, especially someone other than myself." "Jim, honey, you are not to blame either," Joyce reassured him before hugging him tightly. "I – if I had just..." Hopper mumbled into Joyce's hair. "Shh... don't you worry about it. No one was seriously hurt and nothing would have prevented him from finding her." He pulled Joyce away, "No, I could have stopped it. As soon as I found out he was alive, I should have found him and made sure there was no way he could

come after Jane. Even if that meant..."

"Jim, do you hear yourself? Do you think you'd really be able to kill Brenner?" Hopper shrugged, "Sure, why not? I've killed men – people, innocent people – so it shouldn't be too difficult for me to kill someone who actually deserves it. Brenner is a monster and the only thing that will stop him from trying to find Jane is if he is dead." "Hop, that may be true but that doesn't mean you have to kill him." Hopper shook his head, "If I don't kill him, then nobody else will. I have to do it, not just for Jane, for you and Will too. Brenner is a threat to all of us now." Joyce knew she would not be able to talk him out of it, no matter how crazy or dangerous the idea was.

Steve

After he got off the phone with Billy, Steve was smiling from ear to ear. He didn't care that it hurt, he was just happy to know Billy was okay and thinking about him. Will passed him in the hallway and asked, "Why are you smiling like that?" "Oh no reason really, just in a great mood." Will nodded but there was a look of confusion on his features as he continued to walk towards the kitchen. Steve was going to tell Joyce about his plans to go back home tomorrow but stopped short at the door when he heard his name. It was Joyce, "If Steve likes him, he can't be all that bad." He smiled, figuring that Joyce was talking up Billy. Then he heard Hopper scoff and reply, "I don't know about that. Steve did fuck up the other day, who's to say that this isn't another mistake."

Steve had heard enough and locked himself in Will's bedroom. He had been so happy a moment ago yet all sense of elatement had since evaporated. Steve flopped down on the bed. He was a little angry that Hopper had said something so negative. However, the thing that was bothering Steve the most was that deep down he had been thinking exactly what Hopper had said. He believed he had messed up, despite the fact that no one was hurt. Steve thought that he should have been more aware and noticed the super freaks but he had been too distracted by Billy. He also was concerned that Hopper could be right about him making a mistake with Billy. Steve wanted to trust Billy but he still wasn't sure if he could.

There was a knock at the door, "Steve, are you in there?" It was

Dustin. He was in a terrible mood but if anyone could cheer him up, it was Dustin. He slowly got up and opened the door. Dustin nearly ran him over and quickly closed the door behind him, "We need to talk." "About?" "Robin, obviously." Steve rolled his eyes, "Oh." Dustin had already told Steve all about their "date" at The Palace. "She called me! And... she wants to hang out again." Steve smiled, he was happy for Dustin, "That's awesome, man!" "Yeah, she wants me to meet her after she gets off work tomorrow and 'grab something to eat' with her. Does that sound like a *real* date?"

Steve squeezed Dustin's shoulder and beamed at him, "Yeah, man. You've got yourself a real date. And it really says something that she called and asked you." "What do you mean? What does it say?" Steve chuckled, "It means she likes you." Dustin grinned from ear to ear, "I was hoping that's what it meant. I have a little teeny tiny favor to ask though." "What?" "It would be more than a little embarrassing to have my mom pick us up, I love her, but you know how she can be a tad overbearing. Also I feel like it would be ungentlemanly – is that a word? – to make her ride her bike."

"Get to the point already Dustin," Steve sighed. "Could you be our driver for the night?" He hesitated for a moment, just to see Dustin squirm, "Yeah, of course. It's not like I have anything else to do." "Thanks, I knew I could count on you," he paused for a second before asking, "So Steve have you had any luck with the ladies lately?" Steve laughed, "No, not exactly." Dustin was his friend and he wanted to tell him but exclude the obvious details, "If I tell you something, you promise to keep it a secret?" He quickly nodded. "I do like someone and they like me but... I can't tell you who it is."

"I'm a little confused here, Steve. What exactly am I keeping secret if you don't say who it is?" Steve laughed nervously, "You're right, I guess it's not that big of a deal that I like someone. I just don't want *everyone* to know. Especially, not Nancy." "Oh, okay. I gotcha Steve," Dustin nodded in understanding. "So what time does Robin get off work?" Steve asked to steer the conversation away from Billy. "She said she gets off at 5pm so you should probably pick me up at 4:40, no later." Steve softly chuckled, "Okay, then. 4:40pm, on the dot."

After Dustin had left, Steve eventually felt brave enough to venture out of Will's room. He approached Joyce and told her, "I really

appreciate everything you've done Joyce, it means a lot. I can honestly say that I wish you were my mother. With that said, I think it's time I go back home." "Oh Steve, you can stay here as long as you like. You still look pretty rough and need some time to mend." "No, no I'll be okay. I've occupied your couch for too long already and I've missed my own bed. I'm going to leave in the morning but thank you so much for everything, Joyce."

Steve managed to avoid Hopper the remainder of the evening, he wasn't sure if he'd be able to look him in the eyes without feeling ashamed. He left after they all had breakfast together, quickly saying goodbye and grabbing his duffel bag. When he made it home, Steve flopped on the couch and let out a huge sigh. It was as though he could finally breathe again. In his home, with no one around, Steve could be himself and no longer had to conceal his secrets. He thought of Billy and laughed when he reminisced about what had occurred on the couch he was currently sat upon. Steve ran his hands over the couch and leaned towards one of the seat cushions before deeply breathing in its aroma. It smelled divine, it smelled of Billy.

Steve stretched out on the couch and stuck one hand down the front of his basketball shorts. He rested his hand on his cock, contemplating if he should masturbate or not. Deciding against it, Steve rolled onto his side and fell asleep. He woke up a couple hours later to the sound of his rumbling stomach. He checked his watch for the time, it was a little after 2. He got up and made himself a peanut butter sandwich with stale bread. Steve told himself that he would finally go to the Big Buy tomorrow and pick up some groceries. He still had plenty of time to kill so he listened to some music before giving Samantha a call.

He hadn't spoke to her since the 4th of July party. He called her house and as was typical, Samantha answered. "Hi Samantha, it's Steve." "Hey loser, why am I just now hearing from you?" "You know, you could have tried to call me." "I did! I called your house a bazillion times." "Oh, I thought you knew I was at the Byers." "No, why were you there?" Steve went on to tell her about the altercation with Neil Hargrove and how Joyce had basically forced him to stay with her the past few days. He desperately wanted to tell her all about Billy, but he thought it should be discussed in person. After

talking to her for a while, he checked the time.

"Shit! I have to go, I have to pick up Dustin and his date. We need to hang out though, call me later." "Okay, bye Steve!" "Bye!" He quickly changed into some patterned chino shorts and a solid colored button-up. It was over 90 degrees outside, so he left it unbuttoned. He was slightly self-conscious about being so exposed but disregarded the minor insecurity due to the extreme heat. He rushed outside and hopped in the Beemer before heading over to Dustin's house. He was waiting under the porch, "Steve! You are exactly 2 minutes and 23 seconds late!" "Shut up and get in the car!"

Steve managed to arrive at the Hawk just a minute later than the time Robin said she'd be off work. They didn't see her outside so they drove past the theater to find a parking spot. As they went past the alley where he and Jonathon had fought, Steve looked down it and noticed two people. He saw what appeared to be a guy pushing a girl against the wall. After staring for a couple seconds, Steve was able to make out that the girl was wearing a Hawk theater uniform. When he came to the realization that it may be Robin, he quickly performed a u-turn and headed back to the alley. "What are you doing?" Dustin asked but did not receive a response.

Robin

Ally, Robin's replacement, had arrived several minutes early for her shift. Instead of waiting for Dustin inside the theater, she had made the mistake of going outside for some fresh air. Robin had been leaning against the wall underneath the shade from the marquee when she saw Dan. He was a little way down the sidewalk, so she hoped he hadn't seen her yet. She had crossed the road and began walking with her back facing him. She had gone down an alley, figuring she could hide there until he was gone. Robin had seen several people pass the alley without looking down it and she assumed Dan would do the same.

He must have noticed her hair and uniform. After a couple of minutes, Robin had let out a sigh of relief only to have Dan interrupt her peace of mind. "Hey gorgeous. You know, I could pick you out of any crowd. Why are you hiding over here? You aren't hiding from me are you?" Robin's heart had been pounding, "I – ugh – no... I was just

taking a break." "Oh, okay. Do you want a cigarette?" "No, I don't smoke." He had chuckled, softly but it was just as menacing, "Good because I don't have any cigarettes." He had moved so that they were barely touching before reaching for a strand of her hair. He had twirled and twisted it between his fingers like he always did. Suddenly, something had changed in his eyes.

Robin had a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach but before she had been able to move away from Dan, he had lunged at her. He had her pinned against the rough brick wall, forcing his tongue down her throat. Each time she had been able to push him away, she had protested. "*No!*", "*Stop!*", "*Get off of me!*" she had demanded and also tried to scream but nothing had deterred Dan. His hand had found its way up her shirt and the other hand was wedged in her ass. His crotch had been pressed against her and she had felt his growing erection. She didn't know when she had started crying but she had felt helpless and hopeless.

When Robin had seen the BMW pull into the alley, she knew immediately that it was Steve Harrington. She thought at first that she was just in a state of shock and she was imagining him coming to her rescue. It was only when Steve had pulled Dan off of her that she realized it wasn't a figment of her imagination. He threw Dan to the ground and yelled at him, "Don't ever fucking touch her again! Get up and apologize, you piece of shit!" Dan just laughed, "And what exactly will you do? Looks like you recently lost a fight, or should I say *another* fight? How many is that now? Three? Four?"

Steve grasped his collar with both hands and brought his face close, "As much as I want to hit your stupid face, I'll let the police take care of you. My friend Dustin should be back with help any minute now." Dan continued to cackle, "Do you have any idea who..." He was interrupted with the arrival of two large men and Dustin. "There he is, the one on the ground." One of the big guys helped Steve up and told him, "Don't worry, we will make sure he doesn't go anywhere until the police get here." Dan tried to jump up and make a run for it but the buff stranger had quick reflexes. He grabbed Dan by the arm and his friend grabbed the other.

Robin had been sitting down with her knees tucked up to her chest. Dustin approached her, "Are you okay?" She tearfully nodded and he

quietly sat down next to her. She looked at Steve and made eye contact before shyly looking away. He went over to his car and rummaged around for a bit before walking towards her with some napkins in hand. "I hope these are okay, sorry I don't have any tissues." Robin weakly smiled through her tears, "I – it's okay. Thank you, for everything." Steve gave her a slight nod before promising, "He's going to pay for what he did to you. He won't get away with it." She wanted to believe him but they didn't know anything about Dan.

The police arrived a few minutes later and were asking everyone questions. They asked Steve for Dan's name. He shrugged not knowing the answer but before he could speak, Dan yelled, "My name is Daniel Kline and my father is Roger Kline, who you might know as Mayor Kline." The two police officers gave each other concerned glances but they continued to ask their questions and eventually took Dan into custody. He swore as they put him in the police car, "You will lose your jobs over this, I'll be sure of it. My father will not be happy with how his son was treated. He will..." The door being slammed shut cut off the rest of Dan's words. After the police had left and Steve had thanked the two strangers for helping, Dustin turned to Robin. "Well, shit. That asshole is the Mayor's son?"

Though of course he didn't intend to make her upset, Dustin's words sent Robin into despair. She began sobbing uncontrollably and could tell that Dustin was unsure of how to react. Steve sat down on the other side of her, slowly put his arm around her shoulders, and asked, "Is this okay?" Robin leaned into him and wept into his chest. He wrapped his other arm around her and she put her arms around him. Robin wasn't aware of how much she needed a comforting human touch until Steve had offered it. After a little while, he softly told her, "Everything will be alright." She took a deep breath, "No, it won't."

Steve was speechless for a moment, "Though it will take time, I'm sure..." "No, no it's not... that, well *just* that. Dan's going to get away with it; he probably won't even get a slap on the wrist. Even if he does get charged with anything, his father will bail him out in a couple hours and tomorrow he will – actually, I'm not sure what he will do and that's why I'm so scared." Robin pulled away from Steve and hugged her knees. Steve stood up abruptly with a determined

look in his eyes. "I'm going to talk to Hop – Chief Hopper, surely he can help keep that piece of shit in there for more than a couple hours."

He helped Robin up first and then Dustin, "We have to go now though, before Dan has a chance to call his father. Robin, is there anywhere safe I can take you?" She thought about it for a moment, of course she no longer had any friends so the only place she could go was home. She lived with her mother and her mother's boyfriend in a trailer, so fearing possible embarrassment she responded, "No, not really. Do you mind if I tag along?" Steve shook his head, "No, of course not." All three of them piled into Steve's BMW. After driving for a bit, Steve remarked, "When – if Dan gets out of jail, I will make sure that he won't come anywhere near you. I promise."

Normally, Robin would have been ecstatic that Steve had sworn to protect her but after what she had went through, there were no emotions left. She just felt numb. They pulled up to the police station and Steve told Robin and Dustin, "You two wait here." He ran inside the building and was in there for about 10 minutes before finally emerging again. Steve broke the silence in the car by informing them, "Hopper is going to do everything he can but he could only hold Dan there for two, maybe three days." Robin's mouth felt dry, so she simply nodded in response.

"He wants us to meet up at the Byers' house later to talk, if that's okay?" Steve asked Robin. "Yeah that's okay, are we going there now?" "Yeah, unless you want me to take you home first?" She quickly shook her head, "No, I was just wondering." Steve started up the car and pulled out of the parking lot. The car ride was filled with awkward silence, with no one being sure what to say to each other. Dustin hadn't spoke since he had said something about Dan's father. Robin hoped that he did not feel responsible for her becoming upset but she didn't have the energy to say something at the moment. When the Byers' house came into view, Robin sighed in relief.

8. Chapter VIII: Talking in Your Sleep

Chapter VIII:

Talking in Your Sleep

Steve

Steve felt absolutely disgusted by what Dan had done to Robin. There were a couple of occasions in high school when a guy would brag about being forceful or even raping unconscious girls. When Steve was a freshman and sophomore, there were other guys who would speak up against them. Steve eventually became one of those who spoke out. He could not contemplate how someone could do that to another person. He hadn't been sure what to say to Robin but he felt compelled to comfort her. He had been apprehensive about touching her, fearing it would upset her, but he could tell she had needed a hug.

In the car, the tension had been palpable. Steve had attempted to say something several times but the words never escaped his mouth. He had noticed that Dustin was also struggling and decided to talk to him once they were alone. When they arrived at the Byers', Steve knocked on the door. After a few minutes, Joyce yelled for them to come in. After a quick look around, he determined that Joyce was the only there. "Where's everyone else?" Steve asked her. "They are all over at Mike's house, what are you guys doing here?" He looked back at Dustin and Robin before ushering Joyce into the kitchen.

"What? What is it?" she asked quietly but with great concern. "We went to pick up Robin for her date with Dustin and some asshole, he... was feeling her up, against her will," Steve whispered. Joyce put a hand to her mouth in shock, "Oh my, how awful. Did you call Hopper?" Steve nodded. "Yeah, the police were called and he was arrested." "Thank goodness," she uttered before calling over to Dustin and Robin. "Do you two want a glass of lemonade? Or water?" Dustin shook his head but Robin spoke up, "Lemonade would be great, thank you." Joyce sweetly smiled and nodded before searching for a glass.

While she made Robin the drink, Steve motioned for Dustin to follow

him to Will's room. Once they were both in the room, Steve shut the door and asked, "Is everything okay? You've been very quiet." Dustin sat down on the bed and put a hand on his face. "I – ugh, I just feel so bad for making her upset." Steve put his hand on Dustin's shoulder, "It's not your fault. She was already in a fragile state and anything could have set her off." Dustin sighed, "No, it was what I said. I just couldn't keep my mouth shut." Steve patted his shoulder. "Don't worry about it, okay?"

There was a brief moment of silence before Dustin asked, "Umm, Steve... why would he do that?" He was caught off guard by the question. "What?" "Why would Dan do that to Robin? Why would anyone do that to another person?" Steve thought for a bit, carefully considering his answer. "Honestly, I'm not sure. I guess there are different reasons, which all amount to being a bad person. I think that Dan did it because he took "no" as a challenge instead of an answer and because he thought he could get away with it." Dustin slowly nodded in acknowledgement of Steve's response.

Steve moved towards the door and placed his hand on the knob. "Do you think you are ready to head back out there?" Dustin took a deep breath before standing. "Yeah, I guess." They found Joyce and Robin on the couch, quietly sipping glasses of lemonade. Grasping for something to say that had nothing to do with Robin's assault, Steve blurted, "Do you know when Jonathon and Nancy will be back?" It took a second for his quick question to register. "Oh, they should be back tomorrow evening." Steve nervously drummed his hand on the side of his leg, trying to think of something else to say.

Finally he asked, "Joyce, have you ever been to New York?" "No, but I have a cousin who lives there. He was kind enough to let Jonathon and Nancy stay with him." "Oh, that's nice," Steve remarked, hoping that would end the discussion. However, Joyce's features became animated as she went on, "Yeah, my cousin – Keith – he's an artist. I guess creativity runs in our family. He lives in his studio, with his *boyfriend*." The way that Joyce had exaggerated the word 'boyfriend' while looking directly at Steve made him cringe. He hoped Robin and Dustin did not notice.

"A studio? Hopefully, Jonathon and Nance don't have to sleep on the floor." Steve attempted to deflect the conversation with some humor.

Joyce laughed. "I'm sure he has a couch but probably not one that will fit two people, so who knows." Though he was in the process of moving on, Steve had to admit to himself that picturing Nancy and Jonathon sleeping together still made him uncomfortable. He tried to brush off the discomfort and continue the conversation. However, before he could say anything, Joyce spoke, "Oh, I wanted to tell you – and Dustin – that I heard from the lawyer today."

She continued, "He said that the Department of Energy wants to settle the case out of court. We are meeting with them next Tuesday." "Oh that's good. Hopefully, it will be a quick settlement so you don't have to deal with Lonnie any longer than necessary." Joyce nodded and was about to speak when suddenly the door opened and Hopper walked in. He kissed Joyce quickly on the cheek before asking, "Could you, Dustin, and Steve give me a moment with Robin?" Steve nodded in agreement along with Joyce and Dustin. The three of them went outside.

Joyce had brought her cigarettes out with her and began smoking one. "Can – could I maybe bum one of those off of you?" Steve asked her, trying not to let his desperation be apparent. She stared at him disapprovingly but after Steve pouted and gave his best puppy dog impression, she gave in. "Ugh, fine. I won't give you the whole lecture but you should be smart enough to know better." She handed him a cigarette and the lighter as Dustin scoffed. "Steve? Smart? That's actually the funniest thing I've ever heard."

Steve would have thought Dustin had been kidding if he hadn't been able to detect the vile bitterness in his voice. Hurt and not knowing what to say, Steve quickly lit the cigarette and handed the lighter back to Joyce before turning and walking towards his car. He could hear Joyce's reprimanding speech as he walked away. "Dustin Henderson, that was very rude! I never would have thought to hear such nastiness from you. You..." The rest of her words became faded as Steve seated himself in his Beemer and closed the door.

In the sanctuary of his car, Steve attempted to piece together why Dustin was pissed at him. Earlier, when they had spoken in Will's room, everything had seemed fine between them. He couldn't contemplate what had happened between then and now that would anger Dustin. After several minutes and after the car was filled with

smoke, Dustin knocked on the window. Steve rolled it down and waited for Dustin to speak, instead he waved the smoke from his face and exclaimed, "Yuck!" After that appeared to be all Dustin was going to say, Steve sighed. "What do you want?"

"Can I get in? But make sure to roll *all* of the windows down." In response, Steve rolled his eyes and gestured to the passenger seat. When Dustin was in the car and the windows were down, he began, "First off, I'm sorry about what I said back there. You are not stupid." Steve shrugged. "Yeah, I probably am – " "No, you are not and I'm sorry if I made you think that you were. I was just mad." Steve glanced at him and tried to make out his features. "I don't understand. Did I do something?" "No, no." He breathed out deeply and continued, "It's not your fault. I – I think Robin likes you and after today, I think she might be in love with you."

Steve took a final drag on his cigarette and tossed it. "What? What are you talking about? Robin likes *you*." Steve was absolutely perplexed. "She does like me but probably just as a friend. Haven't you noticed that she is always staring at you?" "No, I've never noticed but just because she looks at me doesn't mean that she likes me. I'm sure you've got it all wrong, Dustin." He shook his head with obvious disappointment on his face. Before Steve could say anything else, Joyce approached the car window. She motioned for them to get out and head inside. He took a deep breath before exiting the car. He would have to continue the conversation with Dustin at a later time.

The two of them followed Joyce towards the house. Before they approached the door, she her head and whispered, "What is the creep's name?" "Ugh, Dan Kline." When she heard the name, Joyce stopped dead in her tracks. "He's not related to Roger Kline is he?" "Yeah, he is the mayor's son." Joyce scoffed and shook her head. "Of course he is. Dustin, honey, why don't you go ahead and go inside while I talk to Steve?" Dustin rolled his eyes but sulked into the house. Once the door shut behind him, Joyce turned to Steve. "Roger was a perverted asshole in high school too. He never... *sexually* assaulted anyone though, at least not that I know of. A lot of girls found him attractive but he was – is – an atrocious human being."

She spoke in a harsh whisper, "He was always trying to get me to sleep with him but I had enough sense to turn him down. It drove

him crazy for someone to tell him no, he was persistent but so was I. I think I may have been the only one to say no, and I'm glad that I did. One girl broke up with him and he brought nude Polaroid photos of her to school and passed them around. She ended up moving. Another girl wound up in the hospital after she and Roger were in a car accident. She swore that he crashed on purpose and was trying to kill her. The police didn't believe her though. I hope that his son is not as lucky and has to pay for what he has done."

Steve nodded in agreement. "I hope so too." The two of them went into the house together. Hopper immediately addressed Steve, "So I understand you've promised to protect Robin from Dan?" Suddenly feeling quite self-conscious, Steve nodded. "They somehow were able to move up Dan's bail hearing to tomorrow, so he could be getting out earlier than we expected. We are going to try to get his bail denied, but with his father being the mayor it is likely that strings will be pulled. Are you prepared to uphold your promise Steve?" "Y – yes, of course." "Good. I'm going to have a patrol car at the house tonight and tomorrow but after that I'm going to count on you, Steve." He nodded in understanding. Hopper had Robin say her goodbyes before taking her home. Steve left soon after and he dropped Dustin off.

Billy

The nurses had told Billy that the doctors would probably approve his release when they made their rounds in the morning. He tried calling Steve to let him know but he never answered. Finally, he gave up and left him a voicemail. Billy tried to go to sleep but his mind was running rampant with insecure thoughts. It was light outside before Billy finally nodded off. After what seemed like 5 minutes of sleep, a nurse woke him. Two doctors came in and did a final evaluation, concluding that he was ready to go home. When the doctors left, a nurse gave him his paperwork and his clothes.

He had barely pulled on his underwear before there was a knock at the door. Not being shy at all, Billy had no qualms about answering the door semi-nude. When he opened the door, he was surprised to find Steve on the other side. Steve quickly passed his eyes over Billy's form, which elicited a pink glow to appear on his cheeks. Billy chuckled, "It's nothing you haven't seen before." Steve eyes went wide

and the blush deepened in color and spread to his neck and chest. He looked away but there was no hiding the huge grin on his face.

Billy had to bite his lip to control the urge to kiss Steve right then and there without regard to who might see. He inhaled and with a quiet intensity, he commanded, "Come in and shut the door behind you." The smile still hadn't faded from Steve's face as he did what he was told. As soon as the door clicked shut, Billy shoved him against it and kissed him. He moved from Steve's mouth to his flushed cheeks and chest, showering him with little kisses. Steve giggled. "What are you doing?" "You are so fucking sexy when you blush like that."

Steve looked away and his face turned bright red. "Shut up." Billy gently grasped his chin and forced Steve to look at him. "You are so goddamn beautiful. Don't let anyone – not even yourself – tell you otherwise. Understand?" Steve nodded before pulling Billy in for a kiss. He held onto Billy's hair with one hand and the other wrapped around his waist. Billy grabbed Steve's ass with both hands and thrust his hips forward. Steve softly moaned, muffled by lips, tongues, and teeth. His hand then slid down Billy's back and grabbed onto the waistband of Billy's underwear.

Steve tried to pull them down but only succeeded in getting them past Billy's ass. He squeezed one of Billy's butt cheeks as he grinded against him. Billy immediately felt the warming rush of blood to his cock. Steve smiled as he felt Billy's growing erection. His hand moved around and he swiftly removed Billy's dick from his underwear. Before he got any further, Billy quickly pushed Steve's hand away and stepped back. Frowning Steve asked, "What's wrong?" "If we go any further, there's no stopping it." Steve walked towards Billy. "And?" Billy put his hands up, effectively preventing Steve from getting any closer. "And I am supposed to be leaving. The nurses or whoever will be coming in to clean the room and I don't think they'd be too happy if they found us instead of an empty room."

Steve sighed. "Fine, but as soon as we get to my house, you are *all mine* Billy Hargrove." Billy grinned as he tucked his cock back into his underwear and finished getting dressed. As he passed his hand under Steve's arm to open the door, he whispered in his ear, "Once I am yours, what do you propose to do to me?" He did not give Steve a chance to answer as he turned the knob and swung the door open.

Steve stood in the doorway with his mouth hanging open. "*Coming, pretty boy?*" Billy asked over his shoulder. Steve shut his mouth and followed Billy.

Steve tried to undress him as soon as they entered the Harrington residence. Wanting to savor every minute, Billy pulled away from him. Steve tried to pounce again but Billy stopped him. "Hey, let's slow down a bit." "What is it?" Though there was something on his mind, Billy told himself and Steve the same thing, "Nothing." "You just want to torture me, don't you?" Steve asked in a playful tone. Billy nodded before wrapping his hand around Steve's head and gently pulling him in for a kiss. Steve moaned, which was more of a groan, before biting Billy's bottom lip.

Billy shoved him and commanded, "Upstairs. Now." A sly grin spread across Steve's lips. He nearly ran up the stairs but Billy took his sweet time. By the time Billy made it to the bedroom, Steve was sprawled out naked on his bed. Billy chuckled while he stared at Steve and stroked his lips pensively. "I have an idea." He looked around the room and found what he needed. Before Steve could protest, Billy had tied his arms and legs to the headboard and footboard with shoelaces. "What exactly do you have planned?" There was a hint of fear rising in Steve's voice.

Billy smiled, sharp as a dagger. He antagonized Steve, slowly removing his clothing piece by piece. Steve squirmed and became red as his cock stiffened. Billy licked his lips and began to touch his chest, brushing his thumb over his nipple. He inched his hands further down his abdomen, passing over his taut muscles. Billy stared intensely into Steve's eyes as he stroked his dick. "Please," he quietly begged. "Billy, *please*. I want you so bad, just untie me." Billy ignored him and continued to touch himself. "Please!" Steve eventually shouted.

Billy was beyond amused. He stopped what he was doing and climbed into the bed next to Steve. He kissed him briefly, sucking his lip as he pulled away. Steve moaned and turned his hips towards Billy. "Pl-" "Shh. La patience est amere, mais son fruit est doux." "What does that mean?" Steve asked with intrigue. "Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet." Steve scoffed. "Eventually, fruit rots if its left untouched." Billy laughed loudly. "That's true." Steve smiled, his two

freckles standing out on his rounded cheeks.

Billy brushed his finger over the freckles before leaning in to plant a kiss on them. "I love these two freckles," he told Steve. "I love this one too," Billy said as he kissed one of the freckles on his chin. "And this one," he referred to one on Steve's neck. Billy continued kissing the freckles all over Steve's body and declaring his love for each one of them. Steve was squirming and groaning with frustration the entire time. Billy giggled. "I didn't notice this one before. It is probably my favorite." He alluded to a freckle on the shaft of Steve's cock.

Billy first kissed it before he began to tease Steve with his lips and tongue. Billy closed his lips over Steve's cock until they barely brushed the warm skin. As he pulled his lips away, Billy allowed his tongue to flick out and graze the tip of Steve's dick. He could feel Steve shudder before he pleaded, "Billy, please, I can't take anymore of this." Billy simply shrugged and grazed his fingertips down the entire length of Steve's body. "Billy, fucking untie me *right now!*" The urgency and authority in his voice made Billy's cock throb.

He quickly untied Steve while he kissed him. After he was free, Steve climbed on top of Billy and whispered in his ear, "I'm going to make you pay for that." Billy taunted him, "I'd like to see you try." In response, Steve surprised Billy by flipping him over and pinning him down. "How does it feel with the shoe on the other foot?" He could feel Steve's erect cock against his ass. Without saying a word, Billy began to grind into Steve. He chuckled. "Oh? So you like it?" Billy did not answer but continued his movements with more vigor.

Steve put all of his weight on Billy, preventing Billy from continuing to thrust against him. With Steve's mouth against his ear, Steve whispered, "Do you want me to fuck you like this?" Excited, Billy quickly nodded and half begged, "Yes, yes please." Still holding Billy down, Steve wet two of his fingers before sliding them between their bodies. When the fingers met Billy's hole, he gasped, longing for them to enter him. Steve teased him, gently sliding the wet fingers across and around.

Finally, Steve began to ease the fingers inside of him. Billy moaned as he felt the ache in his balls to release their load. He was desperate to stroke his dick but Steve held both of his arms captive. He could have

broken free of the grasp but he did not want to. Instead, Billy made small movements with his hips and focused on the sensation of his cock rubbing against the fabric of Steve's sheets. It was possible for Billy to finish like this but he wanted to cum with Steve's cock in his ass.

He halted his motions and the fingers were removed. Steve shifted his weight onto one side before spitting into his hand and wetting his dick. Billy felt him slide it between his cheeks repeatedly, slowly adding more pressure each time. Just when Billy thought that he was finally going to fuck him, Steve rolled over onto his back and lay next to Billy. Confused, Billy glanced over at him only to witness Steve jerking himself off. "What the fuck?" Steve laughed villainously. "I told you I would make you pay."

"Asshole!" Billy yelled at him before punching his arm. Steve stopped laughing and rubbed his arm gingerly. "Babe, that really fucking hurt." "You deserved it," Billy spat bitterly but then let out a sigh before pulling Steve close. He gently grabbed Steve's arm and brought it to his lips and kissed it. "I'm sorry," he muttered before reaching for Steve's face. Billy softly caressed Steve's cheek before running his thumb over Steve's lips. After staring into his eyes, searching, Billy finally kissed him.

Steve attempted to get on top of Billy as they made out but Billy pushed him off. He reached for Steve's hand and placed it around his cock and he put his own hand around Steve's. Understanding, Steve began stroking Billy's dick and Billy did the same. At first they kissed, letting their free hands and mouths explore each other. When the pleasure became nearly too intense, Billy pulled away and simply gazed into Steve's eyes as he continued to jerk him off. He watched Steve as he moaned and bit his lip, Billy could tell he was close. "Fuck," Steve whispered in a breathy voice as he came. His hand stalled on Billy's dick and his mouth slacked open as his cock pulsated, spilling hot cum over Billy's knuckles.

As he recovered, Billy kissed his neck and chest. After a minute or two, Steve regained his composure and leaned over Billy. He slid down the bed and put Billy's dick into his warm mouth. Billy let out a deep moan as Steve sucked his cock. He had been so aroused from watching Steve orgasm that it only took Billy a minute or two before

he was cumming down Steve's throat. Steve wiped his mouth and laid his head on Billy's stomach. They held onto each other in silence for a while.

"Billy, what kind of movies do you like?" The question had caught Billy off guard. "Huh? Oh – horror films are my favorite." "Ugh, that figures." Steve rolled his eyes. "What like *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Halloween*?" Billy shook his head. "No, I prefer the classics. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu*, *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy*, *The Wolf Man*, *Dracula*, etc." "I think I've maybe seen one or two of those." "*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* is by far my favorite, you should watch it if you haven't seen it."

A toothy grin spread across Steve's features. "I'd love to, as long as we watch it together." "I don't think they would show it at the Hawk. That is one of the things I miss about California, there were movie theaters everywhere and there was this one that only showed the classics." "The Hawk shows older films during the weekday matinees, I could ask Robin – after a while." Billy nodded in understanding. Steve had filled him in, during their drive from the hospital to Steve's house, on what had happened.

In an attempt to get Steve to think about something else and to meet his own curiosity, Billy asked, "So, what movies do *you* like?" Steve looked away for a moment to think before looking back up at Billy. "The usual stuff I guess. *Risky Business*, *Red Dawn*, *The Terminator*, *Jaws*, etc." "That sounds a little... boring. C'mon what is your favorite movie?" He sighed. "Honestly? You have to promise not to laugh though." "Of course, I promise." "*E.T.*" Billy raised his eyebrows and made an effort not to smile. "*E.T.*?"

"Fuck off, you promised not to laugh." He bit his lip, but Billy could feel a grin emerging. "I'm not laughing. It's a good movie... if you are 8." Steve hit him and Billy couldn't contain his laughter any longer. "Not everyone can like something obscure and cool like Dr. Calamari or whatever." Billy laughed harder, nearly crying. "It's *Caligari*." "Well, whatever. Fuck you." Billy grasped Steve's jaw and looked into his eyes. "You had your chance. You opted for revenge instead."

Steve laughed before giving Billy puppy dog eyes and asking sweetly, "No do-overs?" "That depends on what exactly the do-over entails."

Steve kissed his way up to Billy's mouth. He gently kissed Billy, softly using his tongue. He pulled away before whispering, "What do you want it to *entail*?" A huge grin spread across Billy's face. "I want you to fuck me, of course." "Your wish is my command."

After Steve had fully executed his promise, he quickly fell asleep with his head resting on Billy's chest. Billy had tried to go to sleep but his mind was too occupied. Steve started to mutter in his slumber. Most of what he was saying was incoherent but then he mumbled, "Billy, Billy?" Amused, Billy replied, "Yes, Steve?" "I – I need to tell you something." "What is it?" "I love you." Billy was taken aback and his heart started to race. Billy told himself that Steve did not mean it, he was just dreaming. It meant nothing. Still, Billy could not shake the horrible feeling that what Steve had said in his sleep was true. What frightened Billy the most was that there was a part of him that wanted it to be true. And that same part of him thought that maybe, just maybe, he was in love with Steve too.

Steve

When Steve woke up the next morning, he found Billy sitting on the edge of the bed. He was turned away from Steve but after hearing the rustling of the sheets, he turned to face him with a look of worry on his features. "What's wrong?" Billy looked away and sighed. "I have to leave." "Why? Do you have to go to work?" "Huh? Oh, no. The construction company is being sued and the auto shop hasn't been busy so the boss told me I could take a week off."

"Why do you have to leave then?" Steve asked, confused. Billy still refused to look at him. "I don't want to be here anymore." His words hit Steve in the gut harder than any of his punches. "Why? What did I do?" Billy grumbled low in his throat. "You always make it about you. It's not about you or what you did. This is about me, you don't know anything about me and I don't know anything about you. All we do is fuck, which is great, but I just need a break. I need to check on Max and Susan. Okay?"

What Billy had said seemed disjointed. Though he was saying he just needed a break, his other words made it seem more permanent. Worried that if he asked questions or made any sort of complaint that Billy would indeed make their separation final, Steve agreed, "Okay."

Without saying anything else and without even glancing Steve's way, Billy got up and left. Steve stared after him for a while, hoping he would come back and change his mind. Waiting was futile, Billy did not return.

Steve put the covers over his head and wallowed in self-pity. He was still sulking late into the afternoon when the phone rang. He was in no mood to answer it and the machine turned on. "Harrington, it's Chief Hopper. I wanted to remind you that you are supposed to be looking out for Robin starting today. Just in case you forgot because I had a strong feeling that you would..." Steve had jumped out of bed and got to the phone before Hopper hung up.

"Sorry, I slept in and I didn't even think about it." "Slept in? It's nearly 4 o'clock, Steve." "I know, I'm sorry. What's her address?" He knew from the street name that it was the trailer park. Steve dressed in a hurry and made his way over to Robin's. He walked up to the door and knocked. A scrappy looking man in boxers and a t-shirt answered, "Who the fuck are you?" With the man exhibiting obvious hostility, Steve dressed up his response, "I'm a civilian volunteer for Hawkins Police. I'm here to keep an eye on things, make sure that the suspect comes no where near Robin."

The man simply rolled his eyes and yelled, "Robin! Door!" The man walked away and left the door open. Steve stepped into the trailer, the scent of cigarettes and alcohol hitting his nostrils. Robin sheepishly made her way towards him, clearly embarrassed. "Sorry about all that." "Oh, don't worry about it. Was that your dad?" She rapidly shook her head before whispering, "No, thank god." Steve lightly chuckled before shifting gears to a more serious note. "How are you?" Robin's mouth twisted up slightly. "I'm okay, all things considering."

Sensing that she was uncomfortable in the current atmosphere, Steve suggested, "Would you like to get out of here?" A smile crept across her lips. "I would love to." Once they were in his car, Steve asked Robin where she wanted to go. She shrugged. "I'm sort of hungry, so somewhere with food?" "Yeah, I'm hungry too. How about Mo's? Then maybe we could go to the bowling alley afterwards?" Robin nodded. "Yeah that sounds good."

He couldn't get Billy off of his mind but tried to stay positive for Robin's sake. Steve knew that he had done something to piss Billy off but he did not know what. His thoughts were interrupted when they arrived at Mo's. They went inside and ordered two sodas before looking over the menu. "So, what are you thinking about ordering? They have the best burgers," Steve said in an attempt to make conversation. "I sometimes get the mushroom and Swiss burger... without the beef patty. I'm a vegetarian." "Oh yeah? That's cool, my friend Samantha is a vegetarian too."

"Really? I haven't met very many vegetarians here, just two of my former friends." "She's the only one I've met. You should meet her sometime, she's great." Robin smiled. "Yeah, that'd be cool." Steve smiled back before continuing to look at the menu. It took him a minute before settling on what he wanted. The waitress came back and took their order. When their meal was brought out, Robin and Steve continued to have light conversation while they dined.

After they finished, Steve paid and the two of them walked over to the bowling alley. Neither Robin nor Steve was very good at bowling but they were both having a good time. The pleasant company and physical activity was helping Steve forget about what had happened earlier and he assumed it was doing Robin some good too. She was smiling, laughing, and making lots of jokes. Steve thought she was hilarious. After a couple hours, they decided it was time to leave.

"I don't think I'm quite ready to go home yet," Robin confided in the car. Steve sighed. "Me neither. Where should we go?" "There is somewhere that I like to go at night... but I don't know if I should say." Intrigued, Steve pressed her, "Why not?" "It's sort of, well... weird." Steve shook his head. "I promise you, nothing can shock me. I'm interested, please tell me." Robin smiled and took a deep breath. "I like going to where Hawkins Lab used to be." Steve raised his eyebrows. "Where they are building the new mall?"

She nodded. "Yeah, it's finished and should be opening soon. There's just something calming about the spot, I'm not sure what it is. It's really nice to look up at the stars there too." It took Steve a moment to digest what Robin had said. Hawkins Lab, calming? Just thinking of the place nearly made him shudder. He kept it together though. "Sounds cool. Should we head there then?" Honestly, Steve would

rather go anywhere else but he thought perhaps if he saw it from a different perspective, it would help him move on from the bad things that had happened there.

"Sure, as long as you want to." "Yeah, I haven't seen the mall yet even though my dad is opening one of his stores there." She seemed surprised, "Really? What kind of store?" Steve laughed, "Honestly, it's super lame. It's a nautical themed ice cream parlor." Robin chuckled. "Seriously?" He shrugged and told her, "Yup, the asshole is even making me work there when it opens in three weeks." He paused for a moment, the realization setting in. "Shit, that means he will be home next week to shoot the commercial for it." Not understanding, Robin gave a simple, "That sucks." Sympathetic to her lack of knowledge of his family dynamics, Steve said, "Yeah it does." He suddenly recalled that his father was still looking for a local teenager to star in the commercial. "Hey, would you like to make a couple hundred bucks?"

"Sounds too good to be true," Robin stated with justified skepticism. "No, it's for real. They want a local for the commercial and I can put in a good word to my dad so that you get the job." "Really? You would do that for me?" He nodded and told her, "Of course." She sat up straight and smiled. "Wow, thank you." They finally were nearing the mall. Steve was in awe of how massive it was. It was nearly twice the size of the old lab. "Damn, I didn't think it would be this big." "I know, right?"

Steve parked in the empty lot before they both got out of the car and lay on the hood. Robin was right; the stars were a sight to behold. He let out a sigh and exclaimed, "It's beautiful, but also frightening." Robin curiously questioned him, "Why's that?" "Well with all those stars, and there is even more than what we can see, there has to be other life. I know there is... and perhaps it's not even out there but there are stranger things that no one could even dream up right here on earth." Robin stared at him for the longest time.

Finally he asked her, "What? Are you shocked that someone like me has thoughts?" Robin put a hand on his arm. "No, of course not. It's just that I think the same thing and that surprises me, that I have something in common with Steve Harrington." He looked at her and quietly asked, "Why is that surprising?" She bashfully looked away. "I

have just always thought of myself as an outsider and different from everyone else. Sharing a similar thought with someone as popular as you is something that I didn't think was possible."

Steve looked back up at the stars. "You know, I'm not popular anymore and besides, I never thought that I belonged in their group. I was terrified that eventually they would discover the real me and kick me out of their circle. Which, I guess, is what did happen." "Tell me about the 'real' Steve." He scoffed. "Basically, I'm an emotional wreck all of the time and I care about people more than they care about me." Robin's next words were barely audible. "I care about you." Steve turned and looked at her but before he could respond, Robin kissed him.

9. Chapter IX: Head Over Hills

Chapter IX:

Head Over Heels

Billy

After coming to the realization that he had developed feelings for Steve, Billy had the urge to shove Steve off of him and bolt out the door. Instead, he took a deep breath and tried to fall asleep. The temptation to run away, however, had not dissipated and his anxiety about the situation prevented him from sleeping at all. When Steve had finally rolled over and released Billy from his grip, Billy got out of bed and paced around the house. Eventually, the sun started to rise and Billy knew that he had to make a decision.

He knew that if he and Steve fucked again, that it wouldn't just be sex anymore. As much as Billy wanted to be with Steve, the desire to run away from his feelings was much more overwhelming. He considered just leaving without any explanation but he knew that Steve deserved better than that. Billy marched upstairs and sat on the edge of the bed, making sure to face away from Steve. He knew that he would not be able to leave if he was looking into Steve's eyes when he said the words. However, the pain that Billy was able to detect in Steve's voice had still made it nearly unbearable.

As soon as he said he was leaving, Billy knew that he had made a huge mistake. Unfortunately, the damage was already done and Billy had no choice but to follow through on his decision. He managed to hold it together until he was alone in his car. He hit his steering wheel and screamed, like he had done so many times before. It was no use; the small outburst of aggression did not help ease his pain or guilt. He needed to find a way to dull his emotions and Billy's first thought was that alcohol could do the trick.

Billy drove to a small bar on the outside of town. Luckily, they never carded anyone there. He drank several beers before frustration set in. He was still upset and feeling guilty about leaving Steve. He then noticed another patron grab the ass of one of the waitresses. Taking

the opportunity to be violent, Billy jumped out of his seat and walked over to the misogynist. "Hey, asshole," he said as he grabbed the guy's shoulder. With the man facing him, Billy threw a punch. "What the fuck, kid?" the guy asked as he held a hand to his bleeding nose.

Billy grabbed the man's collar and reprimanded him for his actions, "Don't ever fucking touch someone without their permission. Got it, asshole?" The guy just laughed. Billy responded by throwing punch after punch until he was finally dragged away. He was thrown out the front door and told to leave. Too intoxicated to drive, Billy decided to walk for a bit. After a while, Billy found himself on a street that he recognized. Pulling out the piece of paper in his wallet, Billy saw that it was the street where Susan's friend lived.

He was only a few houses away from the address, so he began to walk towards it. Billy rang the doorbell, suddenly feeling nauseous from the alcohol and his nerves. Some lady that looked vaguely familiar answered the door as Billy vomited onto her doormat. "What the – " Susan had appeared behind the lady and interrupted her, "Billy?" "I'm sorry," Billy barely got out before puking again. Susan's friend spoke, "It's okay, we will just hose it off or something. Let's get you inside, hun." The two ladies helped usher Billy inside to the bathroom.

Susan sat beside Billy and held his hair out of his face as he threw up into the toilet. He wasn't sure if it was because he was drunk or if it was because Susan was showing him affection he hadn't been accustomed to since his mother had died, but he began to weep. Susan stroked his hair and asked, "What's wrong, sweetie?" He didn't answer; instead he placed his arms on the toilet seat and rested his head on them as he gently sobbed.

Susan rubbed his back and told him, "I have some of your clothes upstairs. I'll go grab you something clean and once you feel like it, you can take a shower." A few minutes later, she came back with the clothes. Though he was still crying, Billy muttered, "Thank you," into the toilet, too embarrassed to look at Susan. She left and closed the door behind her. Billy vomited a couple more times before his stomach finally settled. He took a long, hot shower and got dressed in the clothes Susan had picked out. He wondered if Susan knew that the shirt was his favorite.

Billy combed his hair with his fingers before exiting the bathroom. Though the house was unfamiliar, it did not take him long to find Susan and her friend. They were sitting at the kitchen peninsula. "Billy, this is Lisa. She had been over to the house a couple times but I don't think you've been introduced. She's been kind enough to let me and Max stay here." "You are welcome to stay here as well, Billy," Lisa told him. "Thank you, I really appreciate it. I'm really sorry about your doormat. I'll clean it up." "Don't worry about it, it's already taken care of."

"Where's Max at?" he asked Susan. "Oh, she went to the arcade. I have to go pick her up in about an hour." "Is it okay if I go lie down somewhere for a bit?" Lisa nodded. "There's a bedroom upstairs, down the hall, and the last door on the right." "Thank you." He went upstairs and found the bedroom. On the bed, there was a bag filled with some of Billy's things. It was mostly clothes but there were a couple of other things as well. He slung the bag off of the bed before getting under the covers. It didn't take him long to dose off, the loss of sleep the night before taking its toll.

Max shook him awake not too much later. "What?" he mumbled. "I'm just making sure you are alive. My mom said you were drunk and ralphed everywhere." Billy groaned. "Just on the doormat and into the toilet." "Besides being an idiot, how are you? Are you even supposed to drink after getting your spleen out?" Billy laughed. "Probably not." She stared him down until Billy got annoyed. "What?" "You didn't answer my other question." He had purposely ignored it, not wanting to lie to her.

"Health-wise, I'm fine. Everything else, though? It's shit." Max's brows furrowed and she looked concerned. "What do you mean?" Billy was sick of hiding who he was, he had to tell someone. He took a deep breath before telling Max what really happened in California. Once he started talking, it all came flowing out. Though Billy was not intending on telling her anything about Steve, it just slipped from his lips. She had been quiet all through his rant but once he mentioned that he was sleeping with Steve, Max interrupted him.

"Wait, what? Steve *Harrington*? Seriously?" Her eyes were wide with disbelief. Billy started to panic. "Fuck, I shouldn't have told you that. Please, don't tell anyone." He grabbed her wrists. "Promise me you

won't tell. Especially not Lucas or any of the others." Max pulled away from his grip and wrapped her arms around Billy. "I promise, I won't tell anyone. It's going to be okay." As much as Billy regretted blabbing, it felt good to be able to confide in someone. "It won't be okay, at least not with Steve. I've ruined it, I've hurt him."

"What happened?" she pried. "I was... afraid, so I pushed him away. Basically, broke it off." "What were you afraid of?" Billy scoffed. Max quickly added, "You don't have to tell me." He wanted to though, knowing that he could trust her. "Steve said he loved me. He was talking in his sleep, but I think he may have meant it. I was afraid, now *I know*, that I'm in love with him too. I was afraid of losing him." He laughed, humorless. "I'm a fucking idiot." Billy attempted to control his emotions, but the tears started to flow. Max grabbed him by the shoulders. "The Steve I know doesn't give up so easily, and neither do you."

Billy chuckled, despite himself. "Steve is stubborn." Max laughed. "And you're not?" He rolled his eyes in response. Billy then looked at her, hopeful. "Do you think he will forgive me?" She smiled and nodded her head rapidly. "Yeah, it will all work out. I'm sure of it." "Thank you, for everything," he said and surprised himself by hugging her. "Now, if you would kindly piss off, I'd like to go back to sleep. I didn't get any rest last night." Max giggled. "Okay, if you promise to take me over to the Byers' later." "Fine."

He managed to get a few more hours of sleep before Max woke him up again. "Lisa and mom made dinner, come eat." Billy grumbled and stretched before he finally rolled out of bed. Downstairs, Susan and her friend had beanie weenies and a box of Kraft dinner ready. Billy had to fight the urge to comment. Though not much effort was put into the meal, he was still appreciative of the thought. "Thank you for dinner, ladies," he said before giving them a charming smile.

They consumed their informal dinner in the formal dining room, an irony Billy found amusing. Max quickly scarfed down her plate and asked her mother, "Can I go to the Byers' house now?" "Maxine Elizabeth Mayfield, you will make yourself sick eating that quickly! You should know better." Billy stopped himself from laughing. "Besides, you have to wait until I'm finished if you want a ride." She crossed her arms in anger and sunk down into the chair.

Billy teased Max, using his fork to pick up a single bean at a time and slowly chew each one. She stared at him with utter contempt and Billy could see a hint of a smile spread across Susan's face. He ate about five or six baked beans in this manner before Susan spoke up with laughter in her voice, "Alright, that's enough. Don't be cruel." He chuckled and resumed eating his meal normally. When he was finished, Max exclaimed in a whisper, "Finally." Billy stood up and offered, "Would you like me to do the washing up since you did all of the cooking?"

Max groaned in annoyance and Susan gave her a pointed glare before declining, "No, that's okay but maybe the next time. Or you could do the cooking, I've heard you are quite the chef." Billy beamed. "Well I definitely haven't had any complaints. I would love to cook for you all sometime." "It's settled then. Max you are free to go now." Susan turned to Billy. "Make sure you bring her home before 9." He nodded. "Yes, ma'am. And thanks again for dinner."

When they pulled up to the Byers', Billy was relieved to see that Steve was not there. Max quickly unfastened her seatbelt but before she could get out of the car, he stopped her. "What?" "Just... please don't tell anyone." She put both of her hands on his shoulders. "Billy, *I promise*." He let out a sigh. "Okay, I'm sorry. Go have a good time. I'll be back by 8:30." She smiled before jumping out of the car and running up to the door. She knocked once before letting herself in.

Billy left, not sure of where to go. He did not want to return to Lisa's house but he sure as hell did not want to stay at the Byers'. He finally decided to go get an ice cream. There was a little shack that was only open during the summers with an assortment of frozen treats. It was a popular spot for teenagers who would buy their desserts and then hang out in an adjacent empty lot. When he arrived, a few people greeted him. He smiled and nodded but attempted to not get caught in conversation. After he purchased his ice cream, Billy leaned against the hood of his car as he consumed the treat.

Out of nowhere, Tommy approached him. "What do you want?" Billy asked viciously. Wearing that same moronic grin, indicating he was about to do or say something cruel, he came up beside Billy. "I heard you were in the hospital and that your dad beat up Harrington." Instead of responding, Billy just glared at him. He was irritated by

how gossip spread like wildfire in Hawkins. "So my question is: why was Harrington there at the hospital with you? I didn't know you were friends. In fact, I thought you two hated each other."

"He's not so bad." Tommy chuckled. "He used to be cool, until he got with that slut Nancy. I think the breakup really fucked him up. First, he was only hanging out with his ex and her new fuck buddy. How messed up is that? Then, he started hooking up with some goth chick. Gross right? Who knows though, she's probably a freak in bed too. And now?" Tommy grabbed his shoulder and made a sinister sound pretending to be laughter.

"*And now*, Harrington is friends with a fag. Man, that guy has really lost his fucking mind." Billy continued to eat his ice cream for a moment before loudly commenting, "I heard you and Carol got back together. She is excellent at giving head, so you are one lucky bastard. Tell her if she gets tired of sucking your pencil dick, I'm available." Tommy's face turned bright red as the crowd broke out in laughter. Billy smirked before licking his ice cream.

Huffing with anger, Tommy spat, "How would you know what my dick looks like? You like looking at other dudes' dicks, faggot?" "So you admit it? You have a pencil dick." The crowd broke out in laughter again, clearly siding with Billy. In a rage, Tommy smashed Billy's ice cream to the ground. "Fuck you, Hargrove." Billy grinned at him menacingly. "What? You want to fuck me? I thought you said I was the gay one?" Their audience ate it up. Tommy got right up in Billy's face and whispered, "I don't care what you say. I know what you are."

Billy shoved him away and Tommy chuckled before walking away. As much as he wanted to hit Tommy, Billy knew that it would cause even more of a scene so he took a deep breath and slowly leaned back against his car. A girl, who looked vaguely familiar, suddenly introduced herself, "Hi, my name's Fiona." He bit his lip and pretended to check her out. "Well hello, I'm Billy." She blushed. "I know. I went to every basketball game last year. I'll be a junior this year."

"So you are a basketball fan?" She smiled, her flushed cheeks deepening in color. "Not really." Billy beamed at her, putting on an

award winning performance. "I see. You are just a fan of *me*." The girl tilted her head down and looked at him through her lashes. She was an excellent flirt and if Billy was straight, he would have easily fallen victim to her charm.

Fiona was a beautiful girl. She was not very tall but she had long legs and was curvy in all the right places. She had long wavy strawberry blonde hair and porcelain skin. Freckles splattered her face and framed her emerald eyes. Her plump peach lips were slightly parted in anticipation. To keep up in appearances, Billy grasped her hand gently and asked, "May I kiss you Fiona?" Her eyes sparkled and she scooted close to him before softly whispering, "Yes." He caressed her face before kissing her. He intended to take things slow, but the girl was no amateur.

She was sticking her tongue down his throat and stroking his thigh. There were hoots and hollers from the crowd, egging them on. After a minute or so, he tried to break away from her but Fiona was clinging onto him. "What's wrong?" she asked nervously. "Sorry, I just don't like having an audience." Billy saw the tension leave her shoulders. "Oh okay. Do you wanna make out in your car?" He nodded his head, though he would rather do anything else, and they both got in the back seat.

Fiona was relentless with her kisses and touches. As they made out, Billy imagined she was Steve. Luckily it worked well enough that when she grabbed his crotch, he had an erection. She giggled and started undoing his jeans. "Woah, hold on." He stopped her. Fiona frowned. "You don't want a blowjob?" He laughed nervously. "No, not in the middle of a parking lot with a bunch of people basically watching us." "Oh, right. I nearly forgot," she said before smiling.

He looked at his watch. "Shit, I have to go. Unfortunately, I have to pick up my sister. Sorry, can I get your number and we can take this somewhere more private the next time?" She looked disappointed but pulled out a pen before writing her number on Billy's arm. "Call me," she shouted as she jumped out of his car. He adjusted his jeans so that his semi was not as visible. Billy then received a round of applause as he got out and walked around to the driver's seat. He smiled wide for the crowd before climbing into the Camaro and speeding off.

He pulled up to the Byers' house next to Karen Wheeler. She appeared to be sitting in her car, crying. When he had spoken to her before, he was using flirtation to extract the location of the kids from her. She had seemed nice and so he felt compelled to check on her. He lightly tapped on her window, but it still startled her. She rolled down her window, and immediately recognized him. "Billy? Are you picking up Max? I'm here for Nancy and Mike."

"Yeah, I'm picking her up. Sorry, I noticed you were upset and just wanted to make sure everything was okay." Karen sniffled before the tears started falling again. "I – I just don't know how to tell them," she sobbed. "I've asked my husband for a divorce and he is moving out. I tried, I tried for years to keep everything from falling apart for their sake. I just couldn't take it anymore."

He gently squeezed her shoulder. "It might be difficult, but surely they will understand. It may take some time but they will get there. I think they would much rather see both of their parents happy separately than miserable together. I wish my mother would have divorced my father. I would have given everything just to see her happy." She smiled through her tears and told him, "Thank you." "When I go in to get Max, I'll send Nancy and Mike out for you."

Billy knocked on the Byers' door, which was opened by Will. He just stared at Billy, so eventually Billy let himself in. He glanced around the room and spotted Max. "Max, let's go." During his brief and initial search, he did not see Nancy so he instructed Mike, "Wheeler, your mom is outside waiting. She wants Nancy to come too, said it's important." He looked confused but he slowly stood up and went to retrieve his sister. Max finally made her way to the door after saying her goodbyes. Billy somehow managed to get her back to the house on time.

Steve

When Robin kissed him, Steve had no idea how to react. He let it happen and eventually pulled away. He was about to turn her down lightly, but she spoke first, "You don't have to say anything. It's okay. I may be younger but I'm not completely naïve. I know that you don't like me the same way. It's just that I wanted to kiss you for a long time and I acted out of impulse. I'm sorry." He stared at her

speechless for a moment before he could gather his thoughts.

"No, don't apologize. I should be the one apologizing. I promise it has nothing to do with you. You are beautiful and amazing but..." he took a deep breath, nervous because he hadn't said the words out loud, before he continued, "...I'm in love with someone." She looked at him with surprise. "Are you sure it's not just because Dustin likes me?" He shook his head before dissenting, "No, it's not the main reason but definitely a factor." "Are you still in love with Nancy?"

"No, I've started seeing someone else." Robin looked slightly annoyed. "Oh, okay. Who?" Steve sighed. He spun the same lie he had told Dustin. "I can't tell anyone. I really don't want Nancy finding out because I want to stay friends with her." "Surely she wouldn't care." "Believe me, she would if she found out who it was." She narrowed her eyes, probably trying to work out who it was. She must have given up because next she said, "I think it is about time you took me home. Don't you agree?"

"Yeah, let's get you home. Again, I'm really sorry, I know first hand how shitty it feels for someone to not like you back." Robin shrugged. "I understand though, you aren't obligated to share the same feelings." She hopped off the hood before getting into the passenger side of the car. Steve could tell she was upset, more angry than sad, but he did not know what to say to her to ease her mind. He got into the car and he drove Robin home in silence.

He felt a sense of relief after he dropped her off. It was exhausting to carry on a lie. However, at the same time it was a weight off Steve's chest to finally admit to someone that he was in love with Billy. Though Billy had left him just that morning, it felt as though years had passed. Eventually, Steve fell asleep but after hours of tossing and turning. His thoughts drifted between his guilt about Robin and his heartbreak over Billy.

After a quiet and pensive morning, Steve left in the afternoon for Dustin's house. He was nervous, which was appropriate considering what he was about to tell him. Steve knocked on the door; Mrs. Henderson must have been at work because Dustin answered. "Oh hey Steve, what are you doing here? Did we have something planned that I forgot about?" He shook his head. "No, I have to tell you

something."

"Come on in. Should I be sitting?" Deafened by his own thoughts, Steve didn't quite catch Dustin's meaning. "Sorry, what?" "Steve! I said 'should I be sitting', like is it something serious?" "Well, it sucks but I wouldn't exactly categorize it as 'serious'." Dustin nodded in affirmation. "Okay, I'll sit down just in case." Steve followed him into the living room, with Dustin sitting on the chair and Steve sitting on the sofa. "Do your worst, let's hear it," Dustin prodded him.

Steve breathed in heavily before confessing, "Robin kissed me." He thought it best to get it over and done with as quick as possible. Like ripping off a band-aid. Dustin stared at him a moment before sinking into the chair with despair haunting his features. "Really?" he squeaked. "Yeah, I'm sorry man. We were hanging out and then without warning, she kissed me. I told her that I didn't feel that way about her and that... I'm in love with someone."

Dustin was speechless, which was much more concerning than when he was constantly talking. To fill the silent void, Steve continued speaking, "I went to her house to keep an eye on her like Hopper said. There was a guy, I don't know if he is her stepfather or what, but she was obviously uncomfortable. So, I suggested we leave. We had dinner, went bowling, and then she still wasn't ready to go home."

"She made a request to go to her favorite spot. Get this; it's the old site of Hawkins Lab, where the new mall is. Robin said the stars were beautiful out there and she was right. That's what we were doing, looking at the stars and talking when it happened." Steve waited, fully expecting Dustin to say something, anything. He could only take his silence for so long and then he pressed him, "Dustin? Talk to me buddy." Dustin scoffed before going off, "Buddy? *Buddy*? What kind of 'buddy' kisses a girl that his friend likes?"

He hopped out of the chair and paced back and forth. "I told you – I knew she liked you. God! It was so obvious. But of course, *you* couldn't see it. You are an asshole! You took her on – basically – a date and then you are shocked that she kisses you? You led her on. Then you lied." "What? First off, I didn't even think about it being a date. She seemed miserable, with everything that had happened and

then her stepdad was a real piece of work. I was just being nice! And what do you mean I lied to her?"

"You aren't in love with anyone. You said you were seeing someone. It's funny how nobody has actually *seen* this mystery woman though, ironic really. Either you are dating a ghost or you are lying out your ass. I think it is some sort of sad attempt at making Nancy jealous." Steve groaned. "You honestly think I would be that immature to make up a... girlfriend? Just to mess with Nancy?"

Dustin stared him down. "Honestly, yes I do. You were head over heels with Nance and I don't think you've moved on. Which was fine when you weren't hurting other people, specifically Robin. This stupid lie has got to stop, before it hurts anyone else that I care about." Frustrated, Steve blurted, "I'm – well, *I was* – seeing someone! I can't tell anyone who it is because it's a guy!"

Steve, who had suddenly stood up during his outburst, flopped back down on the sofa in horror. Dustin had stopped in his tracks. Steve couldn't bear to look at him, fearful of seeing disappointment or disgust in his features. However, he could sense Dustin's movement towards him. He held back tears as Dustin sat down on the sofa next to him. "Why didn't you just tell me that?" Steve weakly laughed before responding, "How could I tell anyone that, let alone you? I was terrified of being hated, I still am."

"You know, I tried to hate you once when you had started dating Nancy. I had a slight crush on her and I was pissed that she was dating you of all people. But... that was before I knew you. I eventually found out that you are an impossible person to hate. Anyone who knows you, *actually* knows you, could never hate you for any reason." Steve finally willed himself to look at Dustin. "Not even for kissing a girl you like?" Dustin sighed loudly. "No, not even for that. I'm pissed but I don't think I could hate you for it."

"You are right though, I did sort of lead Robin on, even if I didn't realize I was doing it. I should have listened to you, should have seen that she had a crush on me. B – the guy that I had been seeing, broke things off yesterday morning and I think I was too focused on that to notice anything else." Dustin nodded. "Why did he break up with you? Was he scared about other people finding out too?" Steve

sighed, still devastated over the situation.

"I wish I knew why. He said it was because we didn't know each other, which is partially true, but I know it was something else. I don't know why I always fall for people who don't give a shit about me. It's probably a good thing he ended things before... before he could tell me that he didn't love me months and months down the line. Just like Nancy." Dustin put a hand on his shoulder by means of comfort.

"I'm sorry for what I said, I just couldn't think of any reason why you wouldn't tell me who you were seeing. But now I understand. What Nancy did was not okay, but I don't think she meant to hurt you." "No, I don't think she meant to hurt me either. She was just trying to grasp onto something she knew, onto someone who had experienced the same things. But... I kept letting her down. I wasn't supportive. I just wanted to forget it all but she couldn't. I hurt her too."

Dustin stared at him briefly before offering his advice, "Even though I don't know the first thing about girls or love, I think you can't let what happened between you and Nance effect you in other relationships. You could be completely wrong about what this guy feels about you. He could just have the same fears that you have about people finding out. He may broke up with you because he panicked. But... like I said, I don't know anything about dating."

Steve took Dustin's words into consideration. He was correct in saying that Steve shouldn't let his past relationship with Nancy effect his future relationships, but that was easier said than done. Steve wanted to move on and thought he had started to with Billy. However, with what Dustin had said, Steve realized that he might have not moved on as much as he initially believed. Steve was less convinced with Dustin's other theorizations. He could not see Billy just breaking up with him because he was afraid of being found out.

"Maybe," Steve answered with a shrug. No matter what the real reason was as to why Billy had broke things off, it had happened and there was no going back. He stood up from the couch. "I'm going to head back over to my house. I'll see you later, okay?" There was a moment's hesitation before Steve added, "I trust you, but just to be clear, please don't tell anyone about me... dating a guy." He

considered saying "being gay" instead of "dating a guy", but his uncertainty with the former led him to say the latter.

Dustin shook his head and reassured him, "No, of course not. I won't tell anyone, I promise." Steve nodded before he turned and made his way towards the door. Before exiting, Steve looked back at Dustin and told him, "Thank you, and again, I'm sorry about the kiss." He did not wait for a reply as he walked out of the house. As he was driving home, Steve regretted leaving Dustin's. He was not looking forward to returning to an empty house.

As he neared his home, he realized he should have been careful what he wished for. Jonathon's car was in the driveway. He groaned in disappointment, he was not in the mood to face them. He pulled up beside the car and sharply inhaled before getting out. Jonathon, Nancy, and Samantha followed suit and got out as well. Steve awkwardly greeted them, "Hey guys, what's up?" Samantha glared at him as she crossed her arms. "Do you have any idea how many times I have called you?"

"No? I – " "I was worried sick!" she interrupted him, "Luckily, these two filled me in on what had been going on with that girl before I ended up calling the police." Steve scoffed. "Surely, you wouldn't have really called the cops." She stomped up to him and punched his arm, already bruised from where Billy had hit him two nights ago. "Ow! What the fuck? I'm sorry, okay?" He grasped his arm and grimaced. When he finally removed his hand, Samantha must have noticed the discolored skin.

"Oh shit! I didn't realize..." she said as she lifted his shirt sleeve to inspect the bruise. "What happened?" He brushed her hand away. "I don't know. I must have bumped into something." "Well, you are still an asshole for not answering my calls." "I know, I'm sorry. What are you guys up to?" Jonathon cleared his throat. "We just wanted to hang out since Nancy and I haven't seen you guys since we got back." "Oh, what do you have planned?"

Nancy answered, "Nothing major, we were just going to watch some movies at Samantha's." Suddenly remembering his promise, Steve asked, "Would it be okay if Robin tags along? I'm not sure if she will want to but I'm supposed to be looking after her." The three others

looked at each other and shrugged. "Yeah, that's fine," Samantha told him. Since there was enough room for all of them in Jonathon's car, Steve instructed him on how to get to Robin's.

He asked the others to wait in the car as he went to fetch Robin. He knocked and the stepfather answered again. Unexpectedly, the man grabbed Steve around the throat. "Why did Robin come home crying last night? What did you do to her, you punk?" The man's breath reeked of alcohol and his grip was weak, allowing Steve to easily pull his hand away. "I didn't –" "Joe! Stop! I told you it had nothing to do with him!" "Yeah, well, I didn't believe you." "Go back to bed, please," Robin begged.

The drunkard stepped back away from the doorway, leaving an embarrassed Robin to face Steve. "I'm sorry about that. Why are you here anyway?" He spoke in a low whisper, "Why were you crying last night? Was it because of me? If so –" "Never mind that, why are you here?" "I promised to keep an eye on you, make sure you are safe." "Well, I'm fine, you can leave now," she said as she tried to shut the door. Steve stopped it with his foot. "Wait! Me and my friends are going to watch some movies tonight and we were wondering if you'd want to come?"

Robin looked back behind her and sighed. "I don't know." "Surely, it beats hanging around here with your stepdad?" "Don't call him that. He's just my mom's loser boyfriend." She thought for a moment before finally responding, "Fine, just let me change and grab a couple things." Steve smiled. "Okay, I'll be out in the car. Take your time." She shut the door as he turned back towards the street.

When he got back in the car, he was hounded with questions. "What was that about?" Nancy asked. Samantha's query followed right after, "Is that how you got the bruise?" "Who is that guy?" Jonathon added, "I thought she just lived with her mom." Steve put his hands up in exasperation. "Woah! One question at a time! That's her mom's boyfriend and no he didn't give me the bruise. As for why that asshole became aggressive, Robin was upset last night and he blamed me."

He further added, "Which is actually my fault..." he noticed Robin walking towards them, "but, I'll explain that later." Everyone in the

car just silently glared at him as Robin approached the car. Steve cleared his throat and gave the group a look of warning before opening the door. "Hey! Everyone this is Robin. Robin this is Jonathon, Nancy, and Samantha." She gave a little wave. "Hi!" Steve scooted over and beckoned her into the car.

After some awkward silence, Robin asked, "So... what movies do you plan on watching tonight?" Samantha spoke up, "We haven't decided yet, we were going to pick up a couple from the video rental shop." "Oh okay, cool. Steve told me you are a vegetarian, so am I." Samantha gave a small smile. "Good. One less person to try to convince that meat is murder. These assholes still haven't received the memo." Robin chuckled. "Well, now it's two against three. Evening up the odds."

Samantha laughed loudly. "Yes! Then the next step is world domination!" she shouted as she raised her fist in the air comically. The rest of the car burst out in laughter. Jonathon scoffed. "Yeah, good luck with that. I know I'm not going down without a fight." Steve agreed, "Me neither. You'll have to pry the bacon from my cold, dead fingers." Nancy put her own input into the topic, "I don't know, I think I could be a vegetarian. I don't have that weird obsession with meat that seems to be stereotypical of Midwesterners."

Steve and Jonathon groaned in unison as Samantha and Robin laughed with Nancy. Their conversation had ceased as they arrived at the video rental shop. They all piled out of the car and headed inside. They spread out in the small mom and pop shop. Samantha and Robin were chatting in one aisle and Jonathon and Nancy held hands as they looked at the Romance section. Steve stopped himself from rolling his eyes. He started looking at the Horror films and found one of appeal.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. As he went to reach for it, Samantha and Robin approached him. "Ooh, good choice. I've been in the mood to watch something scary. Which one were you about to grab?" Samantha asked him. He could feel his cheeks grow red. "Umm... this one," he muttered as he picked up the empty VHS case. "Nice! A classic." He shyly asked her, "Have you seen it?" She nodded before further explaining, "Yeah, it played during a classic Horror film marathon at The Hawk two Halloweens ago."

"Someone recommended it to me." "Why don't we get it? I wouldn't mind watching it again." Steve slightly shook his head. "No, that's okay. Maybe another time." He did not want to see it unless he was watching it with Billy. The group ended up getting a cheesy comedy and a campy horror film. They also picked up some popcorn and candy from the shop before they all headed over to Samantha's house. One thing that Steve and Samantha had bonded over was absent parents.

After several hours of movie watching, everyone besides Samantha were preparing to leave. Jonathon and Robin had already left the house but Nancy pulled Steve aside. "Before we go out there, tell me what happened with Robin." He didn't think it would be the best time to tell her, but she wouldn't have taken 'no' for an answer anyway. "Well... she sort of kissed me. I wasn't expecting it and she knows –" "Seriously? That's really messed up. You know Dustin likes her! She's way too young for you too."

He sighed. "As I was saying –" "No, I don't want to hear your excuse. How could you do that to Dustin? He really looks up to you." "Nance! I know! She was the one who kissed me!" "It doesn't matter. You're a pervert Steve Harrington," she spat angrily as she stormed out the door. He stood flabbergasted as Samantha appeared around the corner. "Damn, I don't think I've ever seen the princess so pissed off before." Steve was overwhelmed with his feelings. "What? Are you going to call me a perv too?"

She shrugged. "I don't know the whole story. Nancy didn't want to hear it but I do. Call me when you get home and we can talk, okay?" He was relieved that Samantha was offering her support instead of judgment. "Okay, thank you." "For what?" "For being a good friend." She chuckled. "Oh shut up and get out of here before you piss everyone else off too." He smiled and took a deep breath before he headed out to the car.

Nancy remained silent with her arms crossed until they dropped Robin off. As soon as Robin was safe inside her trailer, Jonathon asked, "What's going on?" "Ask the asshole in the backseat," Nancy bitterly suggested. Steve sighed before trying to defend himself, "Nance, if you would just take a minute and listen to what I have to say instead of making incorrect assumptions, you might understand."

"Don't 'Nance' me Steve, I don't really want to listen to anything you have to say right now."

"Please, just –" "Jonathon, drive. The sooner I don't have to look at him, the better." He sunk into the seat and gave up trying to explain the situation. Nancy obviously was not going to hear his side of the matter, at least not tonight. He thought he had been heartbroken when she told him she didn't love him but the feeling he was experiencing at the moment seemed to produce twice the hurt that their breakup had caused. He had lost Nancy as a girlfriend and couldn't bear to lose her as a friend too.

He kept it together until they arrived at his house. Not a word was said by anyone as Steve got out of the car. Once the front door had shut behind him, Steve collapsed onto the couch in a heap. He could not keep all the hurt and pain to himself any longer. He had to tell someone about Billy, he had to say his name out loud to someone other than Joyce Byers. After thinking for some time, Steve decided he would call Samantha and tell her everything.

10. Chapter X: Bawdy and Bruised

Chapter X:

Bawdy and Bruised

Billy

After getting Max home and obtaining a decent night's rest, Billy spent the day with Max. They drove around town and went to the arcade together. It was Billy's first time inside of one. He did not know what to expect exactly but it wasn't too beyond of what he had pictured. It seemed to be a haven for nerds. Most of the customers were younger, around the same age as Max. There were some high school kids, not all of them being total outcasts. That was something that had surprised Billy. Then again, there wasn't much else to do in Hawkins.

After a long day hanging out with Max, Billy decided to call it an early night. The next day, he had woken up before everyone else and so he made breakfast for the whole house. There were not too many ingredients to work with but he managed to make pancakes, scrambled eggs, and bacon. Lisa was the first to enter the kitchen. "Wow, that smells amazing." "Sorry, I hope you don't mind." She chuckled. "No, of course not. Especially, since I did not have to make it."

She made herself a plate and sat at the peninsula. Susan soon descended down the stairs and remarked, "Oh, how lovely! I'll go wake Maxine." She returned a few moments later, with a groggy Max in tow. "There had better be bacon," Max grumbled. "Bacon, along with pancakes and eggs," Billy informed her. She instantly seemed more awake and grabbed a plate. Susan followed right behind her before she and Max sat in the two remaining bar stools with their heaping plates of food. Billy finally helped himself to the meal that he had created and stood while he ate.

"This is really good, Billy," Susan complimented. "Thanks, but really it was nothing. I can do much better." Lisa smiled and said, "Well, I don't think I've had a better breakfast. I'd love to see what you could

do for dinner." He smiled back. "I'll come up with something this week. I'm not sure if you all will like what I make though, most of the things I have made have only been tasted by me. I... used to cook for my mother and father, but my mom would tell my father she did all of the cooking."

Not intending to divulge that information, Billy was now nervous with all three sets of their eyes on him. "Why would she do that?" Lisa asked. He could feel his cheeks grow warm. "Once, because I was proud of the accomplishment, I presented my father with a meal I had made myself. He smashed the plate to the ground and then hit me. He said something along the lines of 'No son of mine will be doing household duties like some fairy' before he started beating my mother. She was unresponsive after he had finished and I had to call an ambulance."

Lisa put a hand to her mouth in shock and both Max and Susan gave him looks of knowing sympathy. Embarrassed and feeling as though he had revealed too much, he apologized, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean –" Lisa put a hand on his shoulder and stopped him, "You have nothing to be sorry for. I'm terribly sorry that you had to experience such violence. Susan has told me about what Neil has done to all of you but I had no idea to the extent and the history of his abuse."

Billy took a shaky breath, anxious but relieved that he could finally discuss the torment his father had inflicted upon him. "I'm pretty sure that my first memory is of my father spanking me. I don't remember what the punishment was for but I remember the pain lasting for days afterwards. He has always been and will always be a violent man." Susan appeared to be affected by his words, pain and regret displayed on her face.

"I – I should have realized. He had seemed perfect before we married. I should have known better, that perfection doesn't exist and that he was just hiding who he really was. He had been so kind to Maxine and me before we left California and I thought that he was just hard on you because you were his son. My father had been hard on my brother, and at first I thought it was the same with you and Neil. When Max was missing and your father hit you, that's when I realized it wasn't the same."

"I should have left him right then and there but I was terrified. Terrified of not only your father but also of not knowing what to do. I don't have enough money for Max and I to return to California, at least not yet. So, I stayed. I could have handled him hitting me... but not Max. Seeing him hit my daughter made me throw all my fears aside and leave him. Thank goodness for Lisa here, or we would have not had anywhere to go." Billy smiled at Lisa. "Yeah, I really appreciate you letting me stay here too." "Honestly, I appreciate all of you being here. This big house can get really lonely sometimes."

Susan grasped her friend's hand. "Oh, sweetie. You mentioned your son was coming home soon, have you heard from him yet?" She nodded. "Yes, he said he should be back by next Friday." Billy was surprised at this new revelation. "Lisa, I didn't know you had a son. Does he go to the high school?" "Oh no, he graduated from Culver Military Academy and is headed to West Point in the fall." "I hope you don't mind me asking, but was your husband in the military?"

"No, well, he was briefly. Martin attended Culver as well and served during the Korean War. He was wounded during the war and received a purple heart. Afterwards, he went to college and received Ph. Ds in Chemistry and Biology before becoming a research scientist for the government. We actually met while he was working at Stanford University. We married in '65, Luke was born in '67, and we moved to Hawkins in '70. Martin passed nearly two years ago during an accident at the lab."

Billy nodded in sympathy, he wasn't sure what had happened two years ago but everyone knew about the lab getting shut down last fall. He noticed Max very briefly narrow her eyes as though she was trying to work something out. She suddenly asked, "What is your last name, again, Lisa?" She appeared taken slightly aback by the question. "Oh, actually it's interesting that you mentioned that. If I tell you all a secret, do you promise to keep it?"

Intrigued, Billy nodded his head along with Susan and Max. Lisa confessed, "Luke and I took my maiden name, Moore, instead of my husband's. Due to his high security position working for the CIA, Martin insisted that we would be safer if we did not take his last name." Max's eyes grew wide and she meekly inquired, "And what was your husband's last name?" "Brenner. Martin Brenner," Lisa

responded with a smile. "He was a wonderful man. I wish that you all could have met him."

Max had just taken a sip of her orange juice and began sputtering, choking on the liquid. "Are you okay?" Susan asked with maternal concern. Max coughed a couple of times before nodding and croaked, "Wrong hole." Susan and Lisa left for work shortly after they had finished breakfast and as soon as they had walked out the door, Max ran to the phone. She called up all of her friends and asked them to meet at the Byers. "Billy, can you please take me to Will's?" she pleaded.

"What is this about? Why were you being so weird about Lisa's husband?" She sighed. "Didn't Steve tell you anything?" "About what?" "Those kids that had powers?" He shook his head. "No, we didn't really talk that much." She rolled her eyes before she looked at him with skepticism. "If you didn't talk that much, how do you know you are in love with him?" Billy lightly chuckled, realizing how absurd his affection for Steve and vice versa seemed from an outside perspective.

"I know it's hard to believe, hard to understand. I can't even really explain it because I'm not sure myself. I don't mean to gross you out but... our bodies do the talking. I feel what he feels wh – when we are together. At the same time though, maybe we are just stupid kids that don't know what love is. All I do know is that I would do anything for him and that I hate myself for pushing him away."

"I think I do understand. With Lucas – it's similar. We had talked but not very much, it was like we just knew that we liked each other. It did not take long after we were going together before I knew that I loved him. Anyway... can I explain the other stuff on the way?" "Sure." Luckily, Max was a fast talker. Billy had no idea to the extent of the knowledge that he had been left in the dark. She explained what had happened at the lab and in Hawkins before they had arrived. Max told him about Eleven/Jane and Will Byers. Demogorgons, demodogs, and the Mind Flayer. She was finally starting to explain the connection of Lisa's husband to everything when they pulled up to the Byers.

She wasn't finished, so they sat in the car as she described that all of

the atrocities were a direct result of Dr. Brenner and his experiments. Billy had been so distracted while listening to Max, he did not notice Steve's BMW park beside them until they got out of the car. Steve was leaning against the trunk of his car, waiting for them. The sight of him made Billy's throat go dry. Max greeted Steve with a wave before looking back at Billy and raising her eyebrows. She quickly winked at him and turned towards Steve before telling them both, "I'll see you guys inside."

Before Billy could say anything, Max ran off in a hurry. He tried to swallow the uncomfortable lump in his throat to no avail. He slowly made his way towards Steve before finally looking up into his eyes. "Billy, can we talk?" Steve meekly asked, barely above a whisper. Billy took a sharp inhale of air. "Sure, but I need to say something first."

Steve

His heart fluttered in his chest. He was terrified and anxious. Steve had no idea what Billy wanted to say but he had hope. After a few moments of silence, an impatient Steve prodded him, "What?" Billy groaned. "*Fuck*, Steve. Give me a minute, okay? You have no idea how hard this is." Steve's jaw snapped shut and he waited. After what had seemed an eternity, Billy finally spoke, "I'm sorry." Steve could tell he wanted to say more but his breathing was shaky as his gaze fixed on the ground.

"It's okay. I'm sorry too." Billy's eyes snapped up and met Steve's. "What on earth do you have to be sorry for?" he asked with genuine curiosity. "I'm sorry for letting you go. I should have screamed, should have ran after you, should have done anything to keep you from leaving." Billy looked as though he had just been slapped. "What? You have nothing to be sorry for. Even if you had done any of those things, it may have not stopped me. I was the asshole that left."

"It might have not have stopped you but I should have tried. Showed you how much – how much I care for you. I –" Billy stopped him by putting a finger to his lips, "I wasn't finished with my apology. I'm sorry for leaving, I'm sorry for hurting you. I know that I hurt you because it *killed* me to do it. Here's the thing: I don't think I can live without you, Steve. I hope you can forgive me because I –" Steve

impulsively grabbed Billy by the wrist and dragged him in between their cars, out of view.

"Go ahead, finish what you were saying." Billy smiled and a blush formed on his cheeks, a sight that Steve had never witnessed. He had been quite certain that Billy was incapable of getting flustered but was now glad that he had been wrong. He smiled back and bit his lip in anticipation. "Steve, I love you. I know it's crazy, but I *fucking* love you. Please, please forgive me for leaving you because I would die before I ever did it again." Steve could feel the joy bursting from his heart at Billy's words, a radiating warmth spreading and spilling over. He smiled from ear to ear and tears began to fall.

Billy cupped Steve's face in one hand and wiped the tears with the other. He frowned as his eyes began to water too. "Please don't cry, Steve. I can't handle it." Steve laughed, drunk on happiness. "Can't you see, Billy? I'm crying because I'm happy. So fucking happy I could explode." "So you forgive me?" Billy anxiously questioned him. Steve pulled him in and embraced him. "Yes, I forgave you the moment you left. I love you."

Billy slightly pulled away and looked at him while he grabbed Steve's face in both of his hands. He smiled, glowing, yet tears began cascading down his golden cheeks. He kissed Steve, desperately and passionately. They held on to each other as they lost themselves in the kiss. Steve wanted the kiss to never end. Billy had him pressed against the BMW. Eagerly, Steve grabbed Billy's ass and rolled his hips forward into Billy.

Billy, who had been kissing on Steve's neck, chuckled. His warm breath tickled the delicate skin just above the collarbone. "*Easy*, baby. We have to go in there and face everyone. That's going to be a lot more difficult if either one of us has a hard-on." Steve's face grew hot with embarrassment. "It's a little too late for that." At that, Billy laughed loudly and looked down at the predicament. "It doesn't look like you are fully hard, you can easily hide it."

Steve gently pushed Billy away so that their bodies were not in contact with each other. "Don't talk about my dick, it definitely won't help." Billy just smiled before he planted a little peck on Steve's cheek. "I'll go in first, see you inside." Steve nodded and tried to clear

his mind. It was no use; his erection was not going anywhere. He let out a sigh before tucking his cock into the waistband of his underwear and hoping for the best.

When he walked into the house, Steve could feel every eye on him. He tried to ignore the self-consciousness that he was beginning to feel creep up. He quickly made his way over to the couch and sat in an empty spot between Lucas and Dustin. He hoped no one could tell that he was blushing. "Is everyone here?" Max asked the group. Joyce let her know, "No, we are still waiting for Jonathon and Nancy." "Oh, right."

Dustin impatiently asked, "Can't you give us anything? I've been here for an hour! Someone can catch Nance and Jonathon up on the info later." Max shook her head, determined. "No, it's better if everyone hears it at the same time." Dustin groaned in annoyance. Max shot him a pointed glare and snapped, "What? It's not like you have anything better to do!" He scoffed and rebuffed, "Actually, they put a new game in at the arcade today and I had planned on going ever since hearing about it two weeks ago." She just rolled her eyes in response.

At that same moment, the door opened and Jonathon and Nancy walked in. Nancy saw Steve first and disgust crossed her features before she turned away and avoided him all together. She then spotted Billy. Gesturing to him and looking around, she questioned, "What is he doing here?" Max explained, "Well, I told Billy everything. I think he deserved to know, considering he ended up in the hospital and lost his spleen because of all of this."

Hopper looked slightly more pissed than usual. "Max, I understand why you would want to tell him but something like this can't happen again. From here on out, the decision to tell someone outside of this room is a group decision. We cannot afford to make any mistakes and have the wrong people finding out about any of this." Billy scoffed, instantly sensing that Hopper disliked him. "It sounds like you are saying that I am one of those 'wrong people'."

Hopper smirked and crossed his arms. "I'm not saying that, but I'm not *not* saying that. I just think that we have to be more careful and to be honest, no one here really knows you that well, kid. Also, what

we do know about you is not exactly putting our minds at ease." Hopper had said enough. Steve was just about to defend Billy but Max beat him to it.

"He's my brother! I know him and I know that he doesn't deserve you talking to him like that! We were both dragged into this just like everyone else in this room. No one here has had a choice and we all need to support each other." An eerie silence filled the room once Max had finished her rant. Steve agreed, "She's right. We need to stick together. One person is an easy target, but all of us? We are basically an army. We need warriors and if the only thing you know about Billy is that he can throw a punch, wouldn't you want him on our side? He's an asset not a hindrance."

There were some mumbles and nodding in agreement. Nancy, still fueled by her anger from last night, attacked Steve. "Hindrance? That's a big word for you. Billy, an *asset*? No, he's just an asshole. So are you Steve." Billy chuckled. "Gee, princess, who pissed in your cheerios this morning?" She turned on her heel and promptly stomped out the door, with Jonathon following closely behind. Max groaned in irritation. "Well, I guess no one wants to hear what I found out about Dr. Brenner this morning."

Dustin, who was already impatient about discovering the information Max had learned, leapt to his feet and followed Nancy and Jonathon out the door. After a few minutes, all three of them returned. With everyone in the room and no further interruptions, Max took a deep breath before launching into the details she had gathered this morning. Joyce had to take a seat; she was absolutely floored to learn that one of her friends was the wife of Dr. Brenner.

"I just can't believe it. I used to babysit for Luke before Will was born. He and Jonathon used to play together. I did find it odd that I had never met her husband but she just said that he was always working. All this time I had no idea." Jonathon contemplated it as well. "I always thought there was something strange with Luke. He never seemed right. Do – do you think that he is like Jane? Would Dr. Brenner experiment on his own kid?"

Hopper shrugged before providing his input, "I wouldn't put it past him. That man – no – that monster is capable of evil beyond

comprehensibility." Steve thought on it for a moment and then spoke, "Jane's mom was pregnant when she volunteered for the experiments, right? Even though Brenner is a monster, I don't know if he'd be sick enough to put his pregnant wife through dangerous experiments." To his surprise, Jane answered him, "I don't know if it is the same for each of us. I think some are just born with abilities without being part of an experiment."

Steve nodded. "Yeah I think that makes a lot of sense. Also I think that Brenner might have been so focused on Jane because she was the direct result of one of his experiments. Proof that it could be possible to create or give someone special powers." Nancy scoffed. "Don't think too hard, you might hurt yourself." Dustin jumped to his defense, "Nancy, what has gotten into you? Steve is actually coming up with some really good ideas."

"Why are you even sticking up for him? Don't you know what he did?" Dustin put his hands on his hips. "Yeah, of course I know. Steve explained everything and apologized." "So that just makes it all okay?" Joyce, who was just confused and wanted an explanation, interrupted, "Wait, hold on. What is this all about?" Steve's face turned red and his chest grew warm, he could feel Billy's eyes on him. Nancy stared him down with a smug look on her face.

"Steve kissed that Robin girl." Hopper's neck snapped towards him and he glared at Steve. "What? You are supposed to be protecting her, not making out with her." He couldn't bear to look at Billy and see his reaction, so he stammered out an explanation while he avoided making eye contact with anyone, "N – no, I didn't – she kissed me! She was home alone with her mom's weird boyfriend and so I said we should go do something. She kissed me out of nowhere, I swear! I spoke with her and explained why we couldn't, that I didn't think of her that way."

Hopper crossed his arms. "Good. You better have. Now is everyone satisfied? Nancy?" She sighed and rolled her eyes. "Yeah, it's fine." "Okay, then. So we probably need to come up with a plan." A thought must have popped into Mike's head because he suddenly started shouting, "Wait! Wait! What if one of those kids with the powers was Luke? Joyce, Jonathon what did he look like the last time you seen him?" They looked at each other before Joyce started to describe him,

"He's tall, has light brown hair, and I think he has blue eyes."

Lucas asked her to clarify, "Is he just tall or like freakishly tall?" Jonathon spoke instead, "Freakishly tall, definitely. Also with all of the military training or whatever, he is really muscular." Steve had only momentarily seen the kids right before he was made unconscious. He could not remember what any of them looked like but he could tell by the reactions around the room that Luke had been there. Mike looked at Jane. "El, do you think he has abilities even though he didn't use any that day?"

She grimly nodded. "He seemed to know what I was going to do before I did it. He jumped out of the way each time I threw something at him. The only thing that worked was if I threw *him*. And I could feel it. That he was the same." A hushed silence fell over the room as everyone absorbed the information. Jane then continued, her voice shaky and quiet, "There was something else too." She shuddered, a tremor of something traveled through her. Steve thought that maybe it was fear. "I think Luke is... my brother," Jane declared.

Billy

The conversation continued for a while after the revelation from Jane that one of those kids with the powers might be her blood relation. There was some intense speculation about how that would make Dr. Brenner her biological father and not just some sick fuck that made her call him Papa. After a while, Billy started to become bored with the discussion. He felt out of place with everyone talking about things that he hadn't experienced.

Wanting to talk about what had happened with that Robin girl, to let Steve know that he wasn't mad, Billy approached him. "I need to use the bathroom, could you show me where it is?" he asked Steve quietly. He nodded and led the way. He stood aside but Billy quickly pulled him into the bathroom with him. "I just wanted to say that I'm cool with Robin kissing you. It sounds like she initiated it and that you set her straight."

"I have something of my own to confess, though. I went to the Sweet Shack last night and that asshole Tommy was there. He pretty much

knows about me and was saying things that everyone there heard. I had to appear, well... not like Tommy had said. So I ended up making out with some random girl in my car. I'm sorry." "Shit, Tommy *knows*? And it's okay about the girl, I get it." "Tommy knows and he also knows that we've been hanging out."

Steve lost the color in his face. "Do you think he knows about *me*?" Billy put his arms around Steve, seeing the fear in his eyes. "No, no. He didn't say anything about you besides questioning the company you keep. He mentioned that it was odd you were friends with Jonathon and Nancy, Samantha, and me. Tommy said nothing about you having the same – inclination – as me." Steve let out a huge sigh of relief but looked at Billy with sympathy. "But what are you going to do?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I tried punching him and I even slept with Carol, before. I don't think he will be satisfied until everyone knows and believes him." Steve chuckled. "Well, he will have a hard time convincing people, believe me. All of the girls are in love with you, even the ones that have already slept with you. And all of the guys want to be you due to your luck with the ladies." "I hope you are right." He slowly wet his lips as Steve watched him.

Billy began to lean towards him, but Steve stopped him. "Don't. Not here okay? We've been in this bathroom together for far too long as it is." Billy groaned in frustration but nodded in agreement. They planned to exit the bathroom at different times with Steve leaving first. After a minute or so, Billy then felt it was safe for him to leave. In the hallway, he found Joyce chatting up Steve. Seeing Billy, she gave him a sly smile, and beckoned him towards her.

"Billy, we haven't officially met. I'm Joyce Byers. I don't know if you remember – " He interrupted her, "Oh don't worry, I remember you." She smiled despite the awkwardness of the situation. "Well, I'm glad you are out of the hospital and doing so well. I know Steve here was terribly worried about you." Billy grinned but Steve blushed, a devastatingly pretty sight. Joyce brought her hand up to her mouth after she realized she had called him out. "Oh, I'm sorry." She rapidly changed the subject. "Billy, I was just letting Steve know that there are sandwiches in the kitchen if you are hungry."

"Thank you, I'm famished actually," he said before leaving Steve to deal with Joyce on his own. Joyce had made a slew of bologna and PB&J sandwiches during the time Billy had spent in the bathroom with Steve. He anxiously hoped that no one had taken notice that the two of them had been missing together. "Where were you?" Max startled him by appearing behind him and asking the question. He grabbed a glass of lemonade and simply told her, "Bathroom," before taking a calculated sip.

"And where was Steve?" she whispered. Billy nearly spat out his drink. If Max had been mindful of their disappearance together, surely someone else had noticed. "*Max!*" he hissed. She laughed before playing innocent. "What? I thought you may have seen him when you came back from the bathroom." He shook his head and glanced around to make sure no one heard the exchange. Satisfied, he grabbed a PB&J and quickly consumed it before grabbing another sandwich.

Everyone was engaged in conversation, except for Nancy, who to Billy's surprise was standing alone. He walked over to her and asked, "Where's your boyfriend?" "Getting something out of his room. Why do you care?" "Well, I have a theory that I wanted to share with you." That caught her attention so he continued, "I think the reason why you were so pissed at Steve was because you are still secretly in love with him." Her mouth stood agape for a moment. "What?"

"Oh, I think you heard me quite well, princess. Besides, what other reason would you have? Who he kisses is none of your business anymore, you are the one who let him go." Nancy narrowed her eyes and he could see the anger boiling within her. She balled her fists and let him have it, "First off, do not call me that. Secondly, I don't think I ever loved Steve so it's not possible for me to still be in love with him. And finally, absolutely none of this is any of *your* business!"

In her rage, Nancy had spoken loud enough for everyone in the room to hear, including Steve. Billy saw the look of disappointment and hurt on his face as Nancy denied ever loving him. A deafening silence filled the room before Steve rushed out of the house. Before going after him, Billy told Nancy in a harsh whisper, "Wow, did I say princess? I meant *bitch*." He followed Steve out the front door but didn't see him anywhere. Billy checked the BMW with no luck. He

eventually walked around the house as he called out Steve's name.

There was no answer and no sight of him. Out of instinct, Billy decided to check the shed. Steve sat on the floor, with his head in his hands. "Baby, why didn't you answer? You had me worried." He ran a hand through Steve's tousled hair but Steve hit it away. "What did you say to her?" "The truth. I said that the only reason that made sense as to why she was so mad about you kissing Robin was that she was still in love with you. I also said she had no right to worry about who you kiss." Steve groaned. "Why would you even say *anything* to her?"

Billy sat down across from Steve, even though the amount of dirt on the floor was practically unbearable. "She is never held accountable and I was sick and tired of it. I guess I wanted to knock her down a peg or two." He placed his hand on one of Steve's. "I couldn't let her get away with talking to you like that. I'm sorry, I didn't –" Suddenly, the shed door swung open and Billy quickly pulled his hand back. Jonathon waltzed into the shed and yanked Billy to his feet. "What the –" Jonathon had him backed against one of the shelves and grabbed him by the throat. "Did you fucking call my girlfriend a bitch?"

Billy laughed, out of habit. Jonathon smacked his head hard against the shelf. "Don't you dare laugh. Answer my question." The grip had tightened on his throat and Billy could barely breathe let alone speak. He began clawing at Jonathon's hands but they didn't ease up. "Answer me!" Jonathon screamed at him. With the hit to his head and Jonathon's shockingly strong grip, Billy was already starting to lose consciousness. Steve tried to pull him off of Billy. "Stop! He can't breathe, he's going to pass out!"

"Good, maybe it will teach him to show some respect." "Seriously, you are hurting him! Please," Steve begged as he attempted to pry Jonathon off. Billy's vision went dark but then he heard the *thwack!* of Steve's fist making contact with Jonathon's face. Jonathon's hands had finally left his neck and Billy gulped greedily for air. "I'm sorry, but you were going to kill him!" Steve bargained with him as Jonathon approached with his fists ready. After gasping for the breaths that he had been deprived of, Billy's head had stopped spinning.

"Stop!" he croaked as he stood to his feet. "I'm the one you have a problem with, St – Harrington was just trying to help me out. I did call her that and I'm sorry. I'll go apologize to her, just leave him out of it." Jonathon had turned to face him and dropped his fists to his side. "You had better. And if I ever hear you say anything else about Nancy, ever, I will fucking kill you." "Understood," he said as he stepped between Jonathon and Steve. Jonathon's nose was bleeding and Billy pointed it out.

Sighing, he wiped his nose with his arm and left Billy and Steve in the shed by themselves. After Billy knew he was out of earshot, he told Steve, "Man, that guy has some anger issues." Steve was rubbing his knuckles and he glowered at Steve, his irritation palpable. "Yeah, well maybe you shouldn't have called Nance a bitch." "But –" "But I don't want to hear it, okay?" He was going to respond but suddenly Billy felt dizzy and had to sit down. Steve ran to his side. "Are you okay?" "Yeah, just a little light headed. That's all."

He put a hand to the back of his head where it had collided with the metal shelf. When he pulled it away there was blood. "Well, shit." Steve got up and looked around for something to stop the bleeding. Not finding anything, he demanded, "Take off your shirt." Billy teased, "I don't think this is the place or the time." "Shut up, we need to stop the bleeding." "Why can't we use your shirt?" Steve groaned. "My shirt is light blue and yours is black, it won't stain. Just take it off."

"So authoritative. I love it," Billy said as he flashed a wicked smile. Steve could not help but smile back. Billy lifted his arms and asked with mock shyness, "Could you help me?" Laughing, Steve assisted him in pulling the t-shirt off. "You are ridiculous, you know that?" He wadded up the shirt and held it to Billy's head. "Thanks." Steve sat on the floor next to Billy and sighed. "Though you were a huge dick and could have went about it differently, thank you for defending me."

"You are welcome and if I ever catch any other person talking shit about you, I will kick their ass. No questions asked." Steve rested his head on Billy's shoulder. "Promise?" "Promise," Billy purred as he tilted Steve's chin towards him. The kiss was a little awkward with Steve still holding the shirt to Billy's injured head. After a while, the makeshift compression was forgotten completely as Steve straddled

Billy. He unfastened the button of Billy's jeans and proceeded to unzip them. Steve's touch was electric and Billy's cock twitched in response. "Commando? That's so fucking hot." His lips brushed softly against Billy's neck as he slid his hand over Billy's exposed and hard cock.

Goosebumps prickled his flesh as Steve closed his hand around Billy. "Feeling better?" "Much better," Billy grunted. "Yeah, baby, just like that." Steve put his lips against Billy's as his hand increased its pace. A low moan escaped from Billy's throat. Steve began trailing kisses down Billy's body. His mouth found its way around Billy's cock. Billy grabbed a fistful of Steve's hair and pulled hard. Steve whined with Billy's dick down his throat, the vibrations making the experience all the more pleasurable.

Even with Billy tugging at his hair, Steve continued. Billy's heart was pounding and with each breath he became closer and closer to coming. "Fuck, baby. You are so good at that." "Fuck," he moaned as he came in Steve's mouth. Steve swallowed Billy's load and wiped his mouth. Billy reached for the button of Steve's jeans. "Steve?" a female voice called faintly. "Steve? Billy? Are you still out here?" It was Nancy and she was getting closer.

"Shit! Quick, put your dick away!" Steve whispered. Billy chuckled but hastily zipped his pants up. Steve scooted back and crossed his legs, resting his hands in his lap to hide his boner. He called out, "Yeah, Nance. We're in the shed." Billy casually leaned back against the shelves. Nancy opened the door and looked around. She scrunched her brows upon laying eyes on Billy. "Why are you shirtless?" Steve ran a hand through his hair and laughed nervously. "He – uh – hit his head and he was using his shirt to stop the bleeding."

She nodded, content with the answer. "It's weird being in here with everything back in place." "Yeah, I guess it is," Steve agreed. Nancy then blurted, "Jonathon said you wanted to tell me something? We waited for you two to come back inside but I got impatient." Billy cleared his throat. "Umm yeah, I wanted to say that I was sorry for calling you names." "Oh, thanks –" "But," Billy started, "I think you owe an apology too." She blinked at him several times before sighing and then speaking, "Steve, I'm sorry for overreacting and saying some

hurtful things."

Her response was far from sincere but Billy kept his mouth shut. Steve shrugged and told her, "It's okay." "Is that all you wanted to say?" Both Billy and Steve looked at each other before nodding. Nancy turned and exited the shed. Thinking they were safe again, Steve started to scoot towards Billy. Suddenly, the door swung open again. It made Billy nearly jump out of his skin. "I figured I would tell you two that everyone is starting to leave," Nancy said in matter-of-fact way before exiting for good.

Steve jumped up first and then helped Billy to his feet. "We should continue this back at my place." "Oh, I agree. I'll drop Max off and then head over. Let's get going." "Wait, aren't you going to put your shirt back on?" Billy looked over at the shirt on the ground and noticed it was covered in filth. "Nah, it's bloody and dirty." He picked it up and bundled it in his hands. Steve adjusted himself before the two of them both left the shed.

When they got back into the Byers' house, everyone except for Will, Jane, Joyce, and Max had left. Steve said his goodbyes before taking off. "Max, let's go," Billy rushed her. She was in a conversation with Will and Jane and ignored him. "Max, now. Come on!" She looked at him, clearly irritated and a little embarrassed. "Take a chill pill, Billy. What's your sudden hurry anyway? Do you know how long I've been sitting here waiting?" He sighed. "I'm sorry, can we just go now? I have some stuff to do." "Okay, okay. Give me a second to get up. Bye guys, bye Mrs. Byers."

She gave a wave goodbye, as did Billy. Once they were in the car, he explained. "I'm sorry, it's just that Steve wanted to hang out and I'm a little excited about it." He could not stop smiling. "So I take it you two are back together?" He nodded and elaborated, "Yeah, he said he wanted to talk but before he said anything I apologized, told him that I loved him, and asked if he could forgive me. He forgave me and said that he loved me too. Max, I don't think I've ever been this happy. At least not for a long, long time."

She smiled and congratulated him, "That's great Billy, I'm really happy for you." "Thanks. All I want to do is tell the world and I wished I could, that's the only thing that is disappointing. But that

doesn't really matter as long as I have Steve." Max cleared her throat and shyly asked, "So, what were you two doing out in the shed all that time?" Caught off guard, Billy was silent. "Billy?" "Umm... we just mostly talked." "What were you doing when you weren't talking?" "Damn Max, you are nosy. We made out, obviously."

She stared at him for a while before suddenly gasping. Billy jumped and asked, "What? Don't do that! You could make me wreck. What is it?" "Your neck! What the hell happened? Is that what hickies look like?" He laughed at her absurdity before telling her, "No, they are not hickies." Billy looked in the mirror and saw that there were finger-shaped bruises around his throat. He scoffed. "No, that's from Jonathon trying to choke me to death." "What? Jonathon did *that*?" she said as her eyes grew wide with shock.

He shook his head up and down, "Yeah, all because I called Nancy a bitch. She was being a bitch to Steve and I just called her out on her bullshit. Beforehand, I had thought Jonathon wasn't even capable of killing a fly, let alone attempting murder. He always seemed so cool and calm, but I found out the hard way that he has quite the temper. I have to be careful not to get on his bad side again. He almost reminded me of Neil and for a second there I was actually scared that I was going to die."

"That's terrible. It is really hard to picture him being violent but Dustin told me about how Jonathon had beaten up Steve once." "Wait, what? When did this happen?" "I guess when Steve and Nancy were still going out. I don't know the whole story." "Hmm, I'll have to ask Steve about it sometime." They pulled up to Lisa's place and Billy asked Max, "Do you think you could tell your mom that I'm sorry but I will miss dinner and then I will be staying with a friend?" She shrugged. "Sure, no problem. How long should I say you would be gone?" "Indefinitely."

11. Chapter XI: Constellations

Chapter XI:

Constellations

Brenner

Luke had promised his mother that he would be home by the following Friday, leaving the team with a little over a week to complete the planning and execution of retrieving 011. The last attempt was spontaneous and as a result, it had failed tremendously. Dr. Brenner knew that he should have been present, retrospectively, but at the time he had assumed that his team could handle it on their own. He had been incorrect and there was absolutely no room for any more mistakes.

He had put the unprepared plan into action when the team had been made aware that Joyce Byers and James Hopper were going out of town. With no adults present and 011 being the only worthy opponent, Dr. Brenner had been confident that his team would be successful. Even when 005 had reported that two older teenagers were present at the location, he thought his team could adapt. However, he had unfortunately underestimated 011's powers, which had exponentially grown during the year and a half after she had escaped.

Though it had been part of the plan, Brenner partially blamed 008 for the sudden increase in 011's strength. Her mission was to gain 011's trust and slowly pull her back into the project. Instead 008 had helped her learn how to control her abilities, making her more powerful than ever before. Brenner immediately removed 008 from her position in the field. Though she and her motley crew of ruffians had been very successful in eliminating most of those involved or who had knowledge of the Hawkins Project, Brenner decided it would be more advantageous if 008 returned to the laboratory. He had also wanted to keep a closer eye on her.

Rebellious by nature, she had not taken her reassignment gracefully. It had taken several months to track 008 down and even after she

had been brought in, she remained insubordinate. After refusing to train with the other subjects, Brenner had placed 008 under solitary confinement. She was still under guard when the opportunity to retrieve 011 had presented itself. Due to his mistrust and 008's lack of training, Brenner did not inform her of the plan. Thankfully, she had a change of attitude and agreed to participate in preparation for their next attempt.

Though 008 was not the most powerful member of Brenner's team, her abilities still greatly surpassed his son Luke's. The strongest link among them was 013. He has extraordinary control over his ability of psionic inundation, inducing pain and causing neurocognitive deficit in his targets at will. The member with the most useful ability of bone manipulation is 007, but her mental instability presents significant problems. She killed not one but two subjects early on in the project.

The remaining member of the team, 005, has abilities on par with 008's and Luke's. She is able to astral project, to be present in two places at once. If she could render her astral body invisible, she would have made an excellent spy. Without possessing that specific facet of power, Brenner did not see her value initially. Instead of being observed at the facility, she remained in her own home. She was monitored from afar and was only recently brought into the lab.

All of the other subjects were observed in the laboratory apart from Luke. He was also unique in the same way as 011. Unlike the other subjects, the two of them were direct results of experimental testing of LSD on their mothers during pregnancy. After Luke's encounter with 011, he had bluntly asked his father, "Did you cheat on mom? Is 011 my sister?" "I –" "You know what, don't even try to deny it. I already know that she is. How could you do that to mom?" Brenner sighed, knowing the truth would be discovered eventually, so he obliged his son, "Your mother knew, not about 011, but about my indiscretion. Terry – she was a persistent woman and I regretfully gave in to temptation. Once. Your mother forgave me."

Luke shook his head. "Would she have forgiven you if she knew about 011?" "I don't know. I was afraid that she wouldn't, that's why I never told her." "Why didn't you tell me? Wouldn't you think that I would want to know if I had a sister out there? A sister who is like me?"

Brenner scoffed. "I wouldn't say that you two are exactly comparable." He could see the rage boiling within his son. "Don't you ever get tired of calling me useless? You created me along with my ability, so the blame is on you not me."

"I never say that you are useless, that is not true. However, your power is just not on the same level as 011 and most of the other subjects. I am honest with you, not to hurt you but to help you son." It was Luke's turn to scoff. "Son? That's rich. I'm basically a glorified science experiment, 011 even more so. You never told her, did you?" "No, of course not, it could have compromised the results." Luke stood up and raised his voice, "She is just a lab rat to you, isn't she? Even though she is your daughter, you would dissect her in a heartbeat if it gave you answers. Do you even know her name?"

Brenner admitted to himself that it did take a moment to recall. "Her mother named her Jane, but technically she only exists as 011 because there is no birth certificate for Jane Ives." Luke stared at him resentfully. "*Technically*, that makes you a huge asshole." Cool and calm yet still menacing, Brenner told his son, "I will not tolerate this disrespect. You agreed to take part in the project and I expect you to do as you are asked without an attitude." Luke sighed. "How am I not supposed to have an attitude? Do you realize how difficult this has been for me?"

"Yes, I understand that the project – " Luke laughed, interrupting his father. "You know, as I've told you before, 'the project' is going to be the death of you. I'm not talking about the fucking project. I'm talking about lying to mom, pretending you are dead. I'm talking about 011 being my sister. The project is a cake walk in comparison." Brenner looked at Luke blankly. "It seems as though I have underestimated your ability to control your emotions. I'm not sure if you are ready for the next phase of the extraction mission."

Luke immediately proclaimed, "I am ready, I swear. I do know how to control my emotions; it's just that I wanted to talk about them with my father. Is that too much to ask for?" Brenner sighed. "In regards to 011, I do not believe we should discuss anything beyond the strategy for her retrieval, especially not in front of the other subjects. However, I do understand how hard it must be for you to keep me a secret from your mother. We can talk about it but I think it is a

conversation best reserved for when the mission is complete, so that you remain focused."

Luke nodded in agreement with his father and with a solemn tone replied, "Okay, I get it." Brenner was relieved that they could move past the awkward conversation for now. He and Luke rejoined the rest of the subjects in the living quarters of the underground lab. After Brenner had faked his death, he sought out private corporations who had previously approached him with interest in his research. With the private funding, a new laboratory was built after the government's lab was demolished. The lab was built in the same location as the old lab and in order to provide a cover for the construction, a mall was built over the site. To avoid running into any mall staff or customers, there is a hidden entrance to the lab outside of the mall's parameter deep within the woods.

One of the private contributors also happened to be the mayor of Hawkins, Roger Kline. Before his turn as the mayor, Kline was the proprietor of several profitable businesses in Hawkins and in surrounding towns. He was rich not only through his businesses but he was also born into money. Through his own finances and through his position as mayor, Kline commissioned the construction of the mall and unbeknownst to the public, the laboratory. Though there were larger contributors, Kline seemed to be the most interested. His one condition was that he must have access to the lab at all times. Brenner had begrudgingly agreed.

Just as Brenner was about to address his team, the subjects and his staff, the metal door slid open. Kline walked through and greeted them, "Hello everyone. Well, I might as well cut to the chase. I want to make sure we have an understanding of what will happen when the mall opens in two weeks." Brenner cleared his throat and explained, "I have talked to my team and –" "Let me stop you there. I want everyone to hear it straight from the horse's mouth. Once the mall opens, you are not in any circumstance allowed to leave during the day. You cannot risk being seen by anyone."

Brenner fought the urge to groan, but this was not the first time Kline infuriated him. Instead of voicing his discontent, Brenner stated, "Yes, that is what I have told them. Everyone has agreed to remain in the lab during daylight." Kline ignored him and addressed the room,

"Okay, if you understand, please raise your hand." Everyone indulged Kline, who then turned to Brenner, "Dr. Brenner? Do you understand?" Brenner smiled at him, without humor. "Of course, I will not raise my hand though. I am not a child. Understand?"

Kline sneered and pulled him aside. "Okay, it is a little silly but I just want to make sure that absolutely everyone is clear, including you. I know that this is your project and all but let me remind you, that without me, this secret little lab of yours wouldn't exist. The mall is an excellent cover but it won't work if there are any misunderstandings." Brenner sighed. "Yes, I agree and I thank you for your financial support and providing the cover. However, I will not tolerate being talked down to."

The mayor grasped his shoulder. "I'm sorry doctor, I didn't realize. I respect you, I do, and I apologize if I have offended you." "No need for an apology. From now on though, please speak to me prior to speaking to my team." "Okay, we are both understood then." Kline turned to the others. "Well, that's all folks. Thank you for your cooperation. I wish you all a good evening." "Wait, before you go Mayor, I have a favor to ask." Once that nuisance of a man had exited the lab, 005 exclaimed, "He is really annoying." Luke and 008 laughed, with 008 declaring, "He's a total dickweed."

013 and 007 stared bewildered at 008, unfamiliar with the slang term. 013 asked, "Do you mean *duckweed*? And how can one be a plant? I don't understand the metaphor." 008 snickered and replied, "No, I meant dickweed. It's just a word for an obnoxious person." The two culturally ignorant subjects nodded in understanding. Brenner added, "It's also an inappropriate word." "Inappropriate?" 007 curiously questioned." Brenner sighed. "Meaning it should not be repeated." A sly smile spread across 007's face. Devious by nature, she took everything as a challenge. She was 16, but small for her age and lacked maturity.

"Dickweed. Dickweed, dickweed, dickweed." "Alright, I think that's -" The rest of the subjects, including Luke had chimed in, "Dickweed. Dickweed, dickweed, dickweed." "Enough!" Brenner bellowed. Though they had stopped the iteration of the word, a few giggles still escaped. "Sorry sir, but we all could use some fun around here every once in a while," Luke told his father. "Perhaps, but we still have a

great deal of work ahead of us and we *all* need to remain focused. It is time for rest. Everyone to their beds, now," Brenner commanded.

Once the subjects and most of the staff had retired, Brenner was left to his own devices in his office. He had analyzed different strategies for retrieving 011 over and over again. Brenner sat at his desk and yet again contemplated the possible actions and their potential outcomes. Sighing, he stood up and walked over to the safe in the corner. Putting in the combination, he opened the safe and examined its contents. Brenner had grown accustomed to letting others do the dirty work. However, if he wanted to successfully capture 011, Brenner had to be armed and ready. Absolutely nothing was going to get in his way.

Billy

The early morning sunlight poured through Steve's window, casting light and shadows over his sleeping form. With his arm flung over his head and his naked body exposed, Steve reminded Billy of that Girodet painting *The Sleep of Endymion*. Billy could not resist the temptation to touch him. He was drawn to the sun soaked skin and lightly stroked Steve's warm chest. Steve stirred but did not wake. Billy leaned closer and examined him, mapping out constellations in the numerous beauty marks that covered his body.

Billy found Virgo, Libra, and Cassiopeia just on Steve's torso. His gaze was on Steve's hips when Steve caught him. He gruffly inquired, "Were you watching me sleep?" Startled, Billy sat up and confessed, "Yeah, sorry." Steve softly chuckled and reached for him. "Come here, you creep." Smiling, Billy nestled next to Steve before they shared a tender kiss. They lay quiet for a moment, content in each other's arms. Seemingly out of nowhere, Steve let out a groan of vexation.

"*Fuck*. It was so nice to not remember that my parents will be home tonight." Billy nuzzled into Steve's neck, making him laugh. "That tickles! I think you need to shave." "I thought you liked the scruff, that it was sexy." Steve grinned. "I said that *you* think it is sexy. I never said it was." Billy playfully bit his neck and growled, "Liar." Steve laughed and then protested, "*Hey!* No, I never said it but that doesn't mean that I didn't think it. I love when you are giving me head and it brushes against my thighs. Gives me shivers, babe."

Billy took that as his cue. He slid one hand down Steve's warm chest and over his stomach until it reached the destination. He followed his hand with soft kisses and teasing nibbles, using his other hand to roughly thumb one of Steve's nipples. Billy hovered over his boyfriend's engorged cock, enjoying the view, before spreading his legs apart. "Like this, baby?" he asked as he brushed against Steve's thighs. A low and carnal moan escaped from Steve as Billy's mouth enveloped his cock. He sucked Steve's dick for a few minutes before stopping, not wanting Steve to finish yet. He climbed onto Steve, kissing him fervently. Billy then pulled away and whispered, "Tell me what you want."

Though the two of them equally enjoyed either, Steve slightly preferred receiving more than giving. "I want you inside me," Steve whispered. Billy stole another kiss, using a good amount of tongue, before pulling Steve up and towards him. Dissatisfied with their positioning, Billy grabbed a pillow and commanded him to raise up off the bed for a second. Shoving the pillow underneath Steve, Billy then grabbed the container of lube off the nightstand. He squeezed a liberal amount onto his fingers and nibbled on Steve's neck while he applied the lubricant.

Billy then sucked on Steve' sensitive nipples as he teased around Steve's hole before slowly inserting his index finger. Steve softly moaned as Billy inserted another finger and began using his other hand to stroke Steve's dick. Once Steve was ready, Billy eased himself inside. He then shifted so that Steve was on top and could control the level of penetration. Billy loved watching him ride his cock. Steve locked his arms around Billy, pulling him close and sweetly kissing him. He moved tantalizing slow but took the full length of Billy's cock.

They continued like that for some time until Billy couldn't take it any longer. He tightly grabbed onto Steve's hips and fucked Steve until they both came. Steve was first, spilling hot cum between their bodies. Soon thereafter, Billy met his own release inside of Steve. Spent, Billy collapsed onto the bed with his head on Steve's stomach. He could feel the rapid breaths that Steve was producing. He was nearly lulled to sleep until Steve nudged him. "Please don't fall back asleep. We have to get moving."

Billy groaned. "Can we just stay here forever?" "I wish we could but my parents would lose their shit." "Let them lose their shit. The bastards." Steve sighed and sputtered, "N – no, I'm not ready for that. Telling Dustin and Samantha was difficult but I at least like them. I hate my parents – well I definitely hate my dad. So it is terrifying even *thinking* about them finding out." "No, it's okay baby, I understand. I know that I'm not prepared to tell anyone else. You don't have to do anything until you are ready. And it's okay if you are never ready."

"I think I will eventually be ready, but it's definitely going to take time." "Well, I'm never telling my father, that's for sure. He beats the shit out of me just for thinking I'm gay, who knows what the fuck he'd do if he knew I was gay." He paused for a moment and then asked, "I have a question for you." Steve looked at him, with some slight concern. "What?" "Do you know if... you are gay or bisexual?" "Umm, I really don't know. I'm not entirely sure what it means to be either one."

"Well, to simplify it, do you want to exclusively fuck guys or do you want to fuck girls too?" Steve deeply sighed before telling Billy, "I want to exclusively be with *you*." Billy squeezed his boyfriend, "Aww, that's sweet but if we were no longer together, who would you date?" Steve played with Billy's curls. "If I said I was bisexual, would you not want to be with me?" "What? Of course not baby, I love you. It does not matter to me if you are gay or bisexual, I just think it is important for you to know so you can develop your identity."

"I guess I am bisexual. I was in love with Nancy and now I'm in love with you. If we were no longer together, I suppose I could date either a man or a woman. Honestly though, I can't imagine dating anyone but you." He grinned at the praise and the notion that he felt the same about Steve. "I can't imagine dating anyone else either. You are it for me, baby." Billy pulled himself up in the bed and kissed Steve. He moaned but then suddenly he held Billy away from him. "Stop! This is going to lead to us having sex again." "Is that a bad thing?"

Steve chuckled. "Normally, no. But today it is." He got out of bed and began to dress. "I have to finish cleaning the house. It has to be spotless." Billy stretched and groaned. "Ugh. Okay, but after we clean can we have sex?" "Babe, you are insatiable. Besides, that would be a

little counterproductive. Don't you think?" Billy heartily laughed. "If I'm insatiable, you are absolutely ravenous. And though I do understand your point, would your parents really care that much about a messy bed?" He sighed and responded, "Unfortunately, yes."

While they cleaned up, Steve explained the abuse he had endured from his parents. Though they were not physically abusive like Neil, Billy learned that they were abusive in different ways. Steve told him, "Once, when I didn't eat all of my dinner, my father forbid me from eating for a week. Luckily, I was able to eat lunch at school or I may have died of starvation." Billy was in shock. "That's really fucked up. How old were you?" "I think I was 7 or 8. When I was younger, like 3, I had wet the bed and his punishment was to lock me in the bathroom every night. I can't even remember how long he made me sleep in there but it seemed like months."

"Wow, my dad never did anything like that to me. He just beat the shit out of me and verbally destroyed me." "Pssh. I think I got the better end of the deal babe. My parents never hit me other than the occasional spanking. Though, they did both say some awful, hurtful things." "My dad would constantly call me a faggot. He also said I was lazy, useless, and had no ambition." "Both my mom and dad would call me stupid, that I would never amount to anything. My father tried to convince me to drop out of school and start working for him when I was sixteen."

Billy scoffed. "Yeah, my dad said something similar. Told me to stop wasting time on school and start working full-time. He had said with all of the girls that I slept with, one of the 'whores' was going to wind up pregnant so I better get a head start on providing for a child." Steve shook his head. "Well, it seems like our fathers could be good friends." Billy dryly laughed. "Perhaps, if your father was a little less stuck up." "Yeah and besides, I don't think my dad has any real friends. Just colleagues."

Over the past few days, the two of them had discussed almost everything. The current conversation had transitioned to describing their different high school experiences. Steve was talking about his old friendships, specifically Tommy and Carol, when Billy suddenly recalled something he had forgot to ask Steve about. "Hey, so I heard that Jonathon beat you up, is that true?" "Well, I wouldn't say that

but we were in a fight. I was winning for way longer than my fight with you."

Billy stroked Steve's cheek. "If that fucker ever touches you again, I'll kill him." Steve placed his hand over Billy's and smiled. "That's sweet babe, but unnecessary. He's definitely not worth it." Billy scoffed. "You know, that night at Laurie's 4th of July party, Jonathon said something that really pissed me off." Steve raised a brow and asked, "What?" "He said that he didn't care himself but because Nancy cared, he threatened me against anything happening to you." Steve rolled his eyes and commented, "Well, that's not surprising really. Things have always been tense ever since our fight."

"I don't like him and I don't trust him. He seems violent and unpredictable. I would know," Billy stated matter-of-factly. "Babe, come on. You are not like him at all." Billy grinned. "Yeah, I know. I'm not a boring weirdo. He probably fucks for shit. Poor Nance." As an unexpected response, Steve's jaw dropped. "You bastard, you've fantasized about Jonathon!" Nervous, Billy started to deny the accusation, "No, no – I mean I..." Steve interrupted, bursting into a fit of laughter. "You should have seen your face!"

After Billy recovered from his momentary embarrassment, he and Steve finished cleaning the Harrington residence. They saved Steve's bedroom for last and before making the bed they had one final romp. Breathless, Steve groaned, "That... was... not supposed to... happen." Billy grinned in response. "You agreed to it. 'As long as we make it quick' you said." "It was quick all right. Ugh, why do you have to be so goddamn persuasive?" Billy cupped his chin. "*Baby*, I just happen to know exactly what you want."

12. Chapter XII: Slip of the Tongue

Chapter XII:

Slip of the Tongue

Steve

After they had made the bed, Billy left and Steve went to pick up his parents from the bus station. Steve waited for nearly an hour before they finally arrived. Per usual, his father was disgruntled. He forced Steve to get out so that he could drive and complained, "I cannot believe the bus was late. What is the point of having a schedule when they do not follow it? Now I won't be able to pick up Sheila until tomorrow." Steve had to stop himself from rolling his eyes at his father's embarrassing habit of naming his cars.

Sometimes Steve thought that his father loved his cars more than his mother. He knew his mother thought the same thing as well. They spent the 20 minutes in the car with Steve's parents questioning about him about the summer and the state of the house. "Tell the truth, did you have any parties while we were gone? Every single piece of my china set had better be intact or so help me..." "No, mom. I didn't have any parties." She stared at him skeptically. "So no one came over?"

Steve sighed. "I did not say that. I did have friends over, only one or two of them at a time though." "Hmm, is that so? Well the house had better be spotless or you will be looking for somewhere else to live." "I promise, the house is clean." When they arrived at the house, his mother walked through and carefully examined each room. She made those small little disapproving noises in her throat while Steve anxiously followed her. Once she was finished, she scolded Steve, "You would think that you would have learned how to properly dust by now, but I suppose it is sufficient."

Steve let out the breath he was holding. "I'm sorry, Mother. I promise to dust better next time." She scoffed and commented, "Funny, you said that the last time." He was about to reply but she turned around and headed to her bedroom, indicating that the conversation was

over. His father began to make his way towards the bedroom as well before Steve stopped him.

"Dad, I found a local teenage girl for the commercial." "Give her a call tomorrow and tell her to come in for an audition at 3 pm." "Yes, sir." Once he was out of sight, Steve went to his own room and tried to sleep. Unfortunately, his mind was plagued with the thought that he only had two more weeks of freedom before starting work as an assistant manager.

The next day, Steve called Robin and informed her of the audition. Over the next couple of days, he met up with Billy in empty parking lots or in the middle of cornfields. After Steve's father forced him to take part in the commercial along with Robin, Billy suggested that he stay over at Lisa's. "Do you think she would be okay with that?" Steve asked over the phone. "I asked Lisa and Susan and they said they didn't mind. It also helped that Max gave you an outstanding review."

Steve laughed and then promised to come over as soon as he spoke to his mother. After hanging up, he took a deep calming breath before searching the house. "Mom? Are you still here?" There was no answer but Steve continued to look for her. Finally, he found her in her bedroom. She was in bed with a sleep mask over her eyes. "Mom? Didn't you hear me calling for you?" She groaned. "I was hoping I was having a nightmare." She pulled the mask up and sharply asked, "What do you want?"

He was attempting to gather up the courage to say it but his mother grew impatient. "Spit it out. I'd like to get back to my nap." Steve sighed and blurted, "I'm going to stay with a friend for a while. I'm not sure how long but..." "Okay? You don't need my permission. Just make sure your room is clean before you leave. Don't forget to dust." She shooed him away and replaced the sleep mask over her eyes. Though his mother could care less where he was, he made sure to write down Lisa's number and put it on the fridge anyway.

He straightened up his already clean room and dusted every nook and cranny. Steve then gathered up a week's worth of clothing and other necessities before pulling out his savings from its hidden location. He took about \$50 out, figuring that it was plenty and some. He threw his stuff into an old gym bag before leaving. Steve

was anxious, but happy to get the fuck out of the prison he called home. The persistent fear that Lisa and Susan might catch on to Billy and Steve's relationship was making him very nervous.

He lightly knocked on the door, hoping he had the correct address. A woman similar in age to his parents answered, whom he assumed was Lisa. "Hello. I'm Steve, Billy's friend." The woman smiled and ushered him inside. "Come on in! Sorry, I wasn't expecting you so soon." She shut the door behind him and called, "Billy! Your friend is here!" Within seconds, both Billy and Max were there to greet him. Max gave him a quick hug and Billy simply remarked, "Well, that was quick."

Looking at his bag, Lisa inquired, "How long will you be staying with us?" "It is entirely up to you ma'am. I was thinking just a few days, maybe more but no longer than a week. Would that be okay? If not, I completely understand. I don't want to inconvenience you in any way..." She stopped him, "No, don't you worry about it. You are welcome to stay here as long as you like. I was just wondering because my son will be returning Friday, but you could sleep in his room in the meantime." He shook his head and gestured. "Oh no, ma'am. I don't want to intrude. I can sleep on the couch."

Billy cleared his throat. "He can sleep in my room on the Murphy bed. I don't mind sharing the room." Steve could feel his face grow warm as Max struggled to hide a knowing grin. Lisa nodded. "That's a grand idea, I nearly forgot about the Murphy bed. Does that work for you Steve? If not, please use my son's room. I do not want any guest in this house to have to suffer by sleeping on that horrendously uncomfortable couch." Steve smiled and nodded. "Yeah. Billy's room is fine." For obvious reasons, he did not want to appear too eager to be sleeping in the same room as Billy.

For dinner, Billy cooked up a meal for all of them. Steve snuck into the kitchen to see him in action. "Whatcha cooking?" "Hey! You aren't supposed to be in here. It's a surprise," Billy said as he swung around and spread his arms to hide the food. "Well it smells delicious. How come you didn't tell me you could cook ba – " He stopped and quickly looked around before leaning in and whispering, "Babe." He quickly planted a kiss on his boyfriend's lips before Billy pushed him away. "I don't want the food to burn. It will be done in a few minutes, so

please get out."

Steve smiled and shook his head before he left the kitchen, amused at how serious Billy was about his cooking. It was about 10 minutes before Billy finally called that dinner was ready. He had everyone sit at the formal dinner table as he served everyone a plate. Steve looked down and made a strange discovery of a large mass wrapped in a tortilla. "Umm... what's this?" Steve seemed to be the only one confused, whereas Lisa, Susan, and Max gleefully bit into one end of the mass.

"It's a Mission burrito, a San Franciscan staple. I know you are picky Steve but there isn't anything unfamiliar in it." He shrugged and followed Billy in tasting the burrito. Steve cautiously took a bite and not finding anything disagreeable, he continued to eat it. "This is really good," Steve praised with a mouth full of food. Lisa stopped consuming her own burrito and commented, "It is just as good, if not better than the taquerias in San Francisco. Thank you."

Susan and Max nodded in agreement and Billy beamed with all of the compliments. After dinner, all of them watched TV for a bit before heading to bed. Steve's heart thumped in his chest as he followed Billy up the stairs. Once they were in the room, Steve quickly shut the door before embracing Billy. They made out for a moment until Billy pulled away. "I'm going to take a shower really quick." "Can't it wait until after?"

He sighed. "No, Susan and Lisa have work tomorrow and I don't want to take one too late. Who knows how long we will be at it," Billy said with a wink. Steve chuckled and relented, "Fine, but hurry up." Steve undressed and climbed under the covers as Billy showered, which only took a few minutes. Steaming and wet, Billy entered the room with a towel lightly wrapped around his waist. He shut the door behind him and locked it.

Steve took that as his signal and flipped the covers down, revealing his nakedness. Billy smirked and dropped his towel before jumping into bed with Steve. They both giggled but Billy put a finger to Steve's lips. "Shh. We have to be extra quiet. You know how loud you can get," he whispered. Steve attempted to protest but Billy stifled his reply with a kiss. He then began to stroke Steve's hard cock, causing

him to moan. Billy bit Steve's lower lip and hushed him. "Sorry," Steve mumbled between their lips. They spent the rest of the night quietly making love to each other.

After waking in the early hours of the morning, Steve decided to leave the comfort of Billy's bed in order to pull on pajama pants and climb into the Murphy bed. He was thankful that he had partially dressed and moved beds because only a few hours later, there was incessant knocking at the door. Billy, a sound sleeper, did not wake so Steve answered the door. Half asleep, Steve thought he still might be dreaming. He had opened the door to find Samantha. He rubbed his eyes but she still stood in front of him.

Samantha strode into the room and closed the door. She paced around the room while Steve attempted to process that she was actually here. Finally, he asked a barrage of questions in a harsh whisper, "What are you doing here? Who let you in? How did you even know where I was?" "Well, I went to your house and your mom said you were at a friend's and had left the number on the fridge. She called and asked for the address. A preteen girl let me in. I really fucked up Steve." "What happened?" She took a deep breath before launching into an explanation.

"Well, we were all super high. Nancy, Jonathon, and I. We were just hanging out at my house. Eventually, Jonathon passed out and it was just me and Nance. Well, we started talking and she started saying some crazy shit. Like institutionally crazy shit, something about monsters and an alternate universe. Obviously, it was just the weed. She started talking about you, how you never understood her but Jonathon did. Then she started crying, said that she felt terrible about how things ended with you and the only reason she acts so passively aggressive is because of all of the guilt she feels."

"I – I just wanted her to feel better. To stop her from being so upset. I'm so sorry, I wasn't thinking." While Samantha was speaking, Billy must have woken up at some point. He popped up and viciously asked, "What are you sorry for?" Samantha started sobbing. "I didn't mean to, I'm sorry Steve. I'm sorry Billy. I told her not to feel bad, that you had moved on, Steve. She started pressing me for information, kept asking who it was. It... just slipped out." Disregarding that he was naked, Billy leapt out of bed with one hand

partially covering his junk and walked over to her.

Samantha averted her eyes but Billy got up right in her face. "What slipped out?" She turned her head away with tears streaming down her cheeks. Billy forcefully grabbed her chin and turned her gaze towards him. "Answer me!" Steve put a hand on Billy's shoulder and tried to get in between them. "Billy, calm down please and give her a chance. And for god's sake, put on some pants or something." He sighed and moved away from Samantha, who then put her back to Billy to give him some privacy as he slipped on a pair of basketball shorts.

After quelling some of her emotions, Samantha was ready to continue. She spoke to Steve, "I told Nancy that you were seeing Billy. I'm so so sorry and I get it if you don't ever forgive me. If I were you, I wouldn't. It just came out before I could stop myself." Steve had to sit down. After some silence, he solemnly asked, "What did she say?" "Something along the lines of 'Oh, it all makes sense now.'" "She didn't freak?" Billy questioned. "No, she was actually really cool about it. As stoned as we were, she might not even remember anyway."

Steve stood up and declared, "I have to talk to her. See what she knows, explain." "Do you really think that is a good idea? If she doesn't know anything, then we can't have you revealing it. We should have never told anyone else, it has been too risky. Nobody else can find out about us," Billy cautioned. Steve shook his head, determined. "No, I have to talk to her." "I'm sorry for all of this, let me know if there's anything I can do to fix it," Samantha offered. Hurt from his trust being broken, Steve shortly told her, "I think it's best if you just go home."

With tears in her eyes, Samantha nodded and left. A couple minutes later, Max briefly knocked before simultaneously walking in and asking, "Is everything okay?" Billy rolled his eyes and harshly scolded her, "You know damn well what is going on, you little shitbird." "Sorry," she muttered. "I can't believe that Nancy told her about all of that stuff. If she was that messed up to be telling those secrets, she probably won't remember what Samantha said," she tried to reassure them both. Steve sighed. "I hope so, but I need to go talk to her. As soon as possible."

"Max, get lost so we can get dressed. Shut the door on the way out," Billy requested. Steve quickly threw on an outfit that he dug out of his bag. Billy started to get dressed too. "You don't have to go with me. Besides, it might be better if I go alone." "No, baby, I'm *going*." Steve could tell that he wasn't going to take no for an answer. "Okay, but hurry up." Steve sat impatient as it took Billy over 15 minutes to get ready. Eventually he groaned, "Billy, c'mon!" After taking one final look in the mirror and adjusting a lock of hair, he finally was ready to leave.

The two of them tried Nancy's house at first. Mrs. Wheeler answered the door. She skeptically asked, "Steve? Billy? What are you two doing here?" Before Steve could say anything, Billy pushed past him. "Mrs. Wheeler, we are looking for Nancy. Is she home?" "No, what is it that you want with her?" She looked from Billy to Steve with concern on her features. "Steve said some things the other day, that he isn't proud of, and he just wants to apologize to her." Her face relaxed momentarily but then she crossed her arms.

"What kind of things did he say?" Steve cleared his throat and answered, "I told her that I hated her, that she was stupid for leaving me to be with Jonathon. I had all this built up anger and I took it out on her. I just want to tell her how sorry I am. That's all." She considered him for a second before answering, "She said that she was going to the park for a bit and then going to Jonathon's after." "Thank you, thank you so much Mrs. Wheeler." They went to leave, but Mrs. Wheeler called after them.

"Billy, can I speak to you for a minute?" He smiled charmingly and approached her. Though she talked in a low voice, Steve could make out what she was saying. "I just wanted to thank you for the other night. You were so sweet and it made me feel a lot better about... well about everything. Thank you," she purred and rubbed his arm. Steve could not believe what he was seeing. Nancy's mom was *flirting* with his boyfriend. It took everything in him to not walk over and claim Billy with a kiss on the lips.

Instead he insisted, "Billy, let's go." He told Mrs. Wheeler goodbye before leaving with Steve. Once they were back in the car, Steve demanded, "What the hell was that about?" Billy tried to play innocent. "What?" "Nancy's mother was totally flirting with you. It

was completely obvious, don't pretend like you didn't notice." A sly grin spread across Billy's lips. "Are you... jealous?" "No, shut up, it's just weird. Super weird." Billy started to laugh. "You are, you are jealous!"

"I am not! Unless you tell me that you are into older women now. What did you do that made her feel better?" "On that night after I had left you, I went to pick up Max from the Byers' and she was in her car crying. I asked her what was wrong and she told me she was getting divorced and didn't know how to tell her kids. I just said that they would understand eventually and that I wished my parents had gotten a divorce." Steve let out a sigh of relief. "Oh, okay. Mrs. Robinson better keep her hands off of you, though. If I see her do it again, I can't promise not to go off on her."

Jonathon's car was at the Byers', so more than likely they were both inside. After Billy turned off his car, Steve sat in the passenger seat with his pulse beating rapidly. "Are we going in?" Billy asked. Steve took several deep breaths before responding, "I just need a minute." He closed his eyes and tried to calm himself. Finally, after some time, he was ready. He inhaled and opened the car door. Billy followed him up to the door. Steve knocked and Will greeted them. Steve nervously inquired, "Hey Will, is Nancy here?"

"Yeah, why?" "I just need to talk to her about something." "Okay, I'll go get her." Will returned a few minutes later with both Nancy and Jonathon before going back to his room. "Shit," Steve whispered under his breath. Nancy approached the doorway with Jonathon right on her heels. "Steve, what's up?" Her voice was a little shaky and her eyes were wide as they darted between Steve and Billy. Steve was certain she remembered what Samantha had told her. "Can we talk, alone?" Jonathon scoffed. "I don't think so."

Nancy turned and braced her hands on her boyfriend's shoulders. "It's okay. We won't be long." "Can we go somewhere private? Just the two of us?" He looked to Billy for reassurance, who gave a reluctant nod. "Okay, let's go to the shed." She walked out the door and Steve followed her. Once they were inside, Steve pulled the door shut behind him with a thud. He braced himself and turned towards Nancy. Before he could say anything, she blurted, "Did you talk to

Samantha? I figured this is about what she told me, or maybe what I told her?"

"Yeah, she came over this morning. I wanted to talk to you, see what you remember from last night." Suddenly, Nancy walked over to Steve and hugged him. "Everything. But it's okay, I won't tell anyone. Not even Jonathon." "You aren't mad, or freaked out?" She held him away from her and shook her head. "No, of course not. I have no reason to be mad, I'm glad that you have moved on and it's not with some 15 year old that Dustin is in love with. It is a little hard to wrap my head around but I'm not as closed-minded as most people in Hawkins."

Absolutely relieved, Steve pulled Nancy in and briefly gave her a tight squeeze before moving on to the next topic of discussion. "What all did you tell Samantha? She just thinks you were high as balls so she doesn't believe any of what you said. Thank god." "Well she was talking about dropping acid and seeing some weird stuff and I don't know why I said it, but I said I've seen crazier shit in real life. I described the Demogorgon and demodogs and I told her about the Upside Down. Once I started talking, I couldn't stop."

Though Samantha had mentioned part of it, Steve was still curious so he asked, "How did you two wind up talking about me?" Nancy sighed and then explained, "We started talking about Barb and how me and you weren't seeing eye-to-eye on revealing what we knew. I told her that it was part of the reason why we broke up, that you didn't understand but Jonathon did and how important it was to me. Then – then I started crying. All of the things that I had felt about our breakup but never had a chance to talk about started to surface. I felt – I still feel so guilty for things ending the way they did, seeing how much I've hurt you, and then for saying those awful things the other day."

Nancy paused and took a deep breath. "You know, Samantha was just trying to let me know you were okay. She may have gone about it the wrong way but you should forgive her. She really cares about you." Steve sighed. "I know. It is just going to take some time. I was so worried about anyone finding out, but especially you. I was afraid that you wouldn't want to be friends anymore." "Oh Steve, I was worried you wouldn't want to be friends after I said all those terrible

things."

She sighed and then continued, "I didn't mean it, when I said I never loved you. Billy just pushed my buttons and I snapped. And with the whole Robin situation, I was so upset because it seemed completely unlike you. And I – I was worried that me hurting you is what had changed you." Steve shook his head. "No, no. I mean, at first, it was really hard and I was devastated. And then when you started dating Jonathon so quickly afterwards, it fucked with my head. I have changed, but you are not to blame and shouldn't worry."

"But I *was* worried. You seemed so sad and distant. But... I can tell Billy has done you some good, even if he is an asshole. You seem a lot happier." Steve smiled but it quickly faded. "I am getting there but I still have a long way to go. It's just been so difficult to hide our relationship. We've only told Max and Samantha. Dustin knows that I'm with a guy but not that it is Billy. Joyce found out, accidentally, and then Samantha told you. Other than that, and maybe Tommy, nobody knows. I wish we didn't have to keep it secret but it's our reality."

"Tommy knows? I'm surprised it hasn't spread through the whole town yet." "Well, he has a hunch that Billy is gay. He doesn't know about us but he knows I have been hanging out with Billy. He's tried to call Billy out but no one has believed him, at least not yet. Thank god." "We should be getting back. I don't know if it's a good idea to leave Jonathon with Billy for so long. Or vice versa." Steve nodded. "Yeah, Billy has a tendency to start shit." They went to leave the shed but Steve stopped Nancy. "Nance, wait." He grabbed her and hugged her. "Thank you. For listening and understanding and for not hating me."

She hugged him back and said, "Anytime you need to talk, I'm here okay?" "Okay. Let's go check on our boyfriends." The two of them found Jonathon and Billy quietly sitting inside the house. Jonathon immediately jumped to his feet and asked, "Is everything alright?" Nancy spoke the truth, but also covered for Steve. "Well, last night I messed up. I told Samantha some things after you had fell asleep. I revealed some stuff about the Upside Down and then I started talking about what happened with Steve and how I felt guilty about it."

"What?!" Steve continued for her, "Samantha came over this morning and told me about it, she just thinks that Nancy was high. I wanted to get Nancy's side of things and also have a long awaited discussion about everything that had happened between us last year." Jonathon crossed his arms and looked at both of them with suspicion. "So Samantha didn't believe any of it?" Nancy and Steve both synchronically shook their heads side to side. "I guess that's good then. I hope she doesn't tell anyone else about it." "I don't think she will but we could talk to her to make sure," Steve suggested.

Jonathon scoffed. "Yeah, right. That's a stupid idea." Billy stood up and walked over to him, getting in his face. "I don't exactly hear you coming up with any brilliant plans." Jonathon shoved him and in response Billy clicked his tongue and gave a wicked smile. "Though I would like nothing more than to punch that dopey ass face of yours, I'm going to try and keep things civil. So, what do *you* propose we should do?" Jonathon sighed. "I think we should just leave it. She won't tell."

Steve shrugged and commented, "Okay but if Samantha does end up blabbing, you get all the blame." "She won't. I trust her," Jonathon said with confidence that Steve had recently lost. Not wanting to argue, Steve didn't press the issue any further. "Well with all that cleared up, I guess we will be heading off then." He and Billy were about to take off when Jonathon called out, "Wait, I have a question for you two." Billy sharply responded, "What?" "I was just wondering when the two of you became all buddy-buddy. I would think Steve would have enough sense to not hang out with someone who nearly killed him."

He chuckled before continuing, "Then again, he still puts up with me even though I fucked his face up once." Steve looked to Billy, knowing that Jonathon's words would set him off. He could see the anger in his features so Steve had to act fast. "What can I say? I'm a forgiving person." Jonathon scoffed. "Maybe you're just an idiot." Nancy warned him, "Hey!" Billy started to bolt towards Jonathon but Steve stepped in front of him and held him back. "What the fuck is your problem?" Billy yelled at Jonathon.

"My problem? I don't have a problem. I've never really liked Steve; I've just tolerated him for Nancy's sake. Steve is the one with the

problem. Why in the hell would he want to be friends with me, let alone you? There's obviously something not clicking in that head of his. I'm tired of pretending to be his friend in order to spare everyone's feelings. Okay? I'm done." Nancy was in shock. "What the hell Jonathon?!" Steve struggled to hold Billy back and quietly begged, "Please, don't. Let me handle this."

Billy groaned but remained where he was, to Steve's surprise. Steve turned and stared down Jonathon. "I know you don't like me, that you never liked me. I'm not your biggest fan either but I try not to be an asshole about it. For both Nancy and Samantha. I get it man, I really do, but we have much bigger problems and worrying about who likes who is a waste of energy. So let's just leave it at that, we don't like each other but we need to tolerate each other for the sake of everyone. You don't have to pretend to be my friend, I see through that shit. Just don't be a dick."

"Well, if I agree not to be a dick you have to agree not to be an idiot." Steve attempted to stop Billy, but it was too late. "Billy, no!" Steve's plea fell on deaf ears. Billy shoved Jonathon as he laughed. "You know, you are the only idiot here Jonny Boy. Everyone sees through your bullshit. Just because you are a pretentious fuck who likes to take pictures doesn't mean you are some sort of genius. Maybe if you actually took the time to get to know Steve, you'd learn just how wrong you are."

Steve took the opportunity to get between the two of them. He gave Billy a stern look, hoping he wouldn't go after Jonathon again. Nancy then unexpectedly defended Steve, "Billy is right. Steve is not an idiot – not any more so than you Jonathon. Sure he didn't make straight A's but he did great in some subjects. Math. Econ. Spanish. He's a great athlete. Basketball. Baseball. Tennis. Track. He's also really funny." She listed the qualities Steve possessed on her fingers. "Umm... Steve is also right here and doesn't exactly like to be talked about like he isn't."

Nancy giggled. "See! Hilarious!" Jonathon rolled his eyes. Nancy walked over to her boyfriend and slid her arm around his waist. He pulled away from her and had a dark look in his eyes. "If he's so great, why be with me? Why choose me over him?" Nancy was speechless for a moment. "Where is this coming from? I love you,

that's why." "You loved *him*. You... went back to him after Tommy spray painted the marquee at the Hawk," Jonathon's voice cracked as he became emotional. He wrapped his arms around himself.

Steve had never seen Jonathon like this before. Steve knew that he was sensitive, Nancy was always saying it, but he wasn't expecting this. Steve cautiously approached him. "Jonathon, Nancy may have loved me before, but that was before everything that had happened. Before Barb died. Before I let Tommy write those terrible things. Before fighting the Demogorgon. Before our entire world was turned upside down. You were there for her, I wasn't. Not in way she needed me to be. She loves you, man." He put a hand on his shoulder.

Jonathon violently pushed Steve's hand away, which then made contact with Nancy's face. Horrified, Steve exclaimed, "Oh shit, sorry! Nance, are you okay?" She was leaning over holding her hands over her face. She mumbled through her fingers, "Yeah, I'll be fine." Jonathon had his hand on her back and gently asked, "Let me see." She stood up straight and removed her hands from her face. Her nose was bleeding profusely. Steve felt terrible and attempted another apology, "Fuck, I'm s - "

He was interrupted with a hard hit to his cheekbone. There was a sickening *crunch* as Jonathon's fist met his face. "Jonathon!" Nancy screamed at him. Knowing what would happen next, Steve tried to shout at Billy. It was too late. Billy threw Jonathon to the ground, his rage fueling his ferocity. Billy jumped on top of him and began to throw punch after punch. "Billy! Stop!" Steve yelled and tried to pry him off of Jonathon. "Please!" Nancy cried out.

Billy stalled his fists. Jonathon laughed as he lay on the ground. "Looks like you've finally found someone to fight your battles for you, Steve." He then looked directly at Billy. "Why is that? Are you in love with him or something?" Billy punched him again. Steve grabbed his arms and begged, "Stop Billy! You promised! He's not worth it." Billy groaned in frustration and punched the floor next to Jonathon's head. Suddenly Jonathon's expression changed from humor to confusion.

As he looked from Billy to Steve, a look of realization flashed in Jonathon's eyes. Billy noticed it too and stood up with Steve guiding him away. "Come on. Let's just go. Sorry Jonathon, sorry Nancy,"

Steve blurted as he dragged Billy away. He did not know how to deal with everything going on and just wanted to get the fuck out of there as soon as possible. Nancy called after him, "Wait! We need to discuss this! Steve!" He ignored her and didn't stop until they were inside Billy's car.

13. Chapter XIII: Loaded God Complex

Chapter XIII:

Loaded God Complex

Billy

Billy's fists throbbed as he sat silent in the car while Steve berated him. "What the fuck?! Why couldn't you just let him hit me? Now he fucking knows. Do you ever fucking listen?" Billy had tried to keep his composure but his temper took over. He screamed into Steve's face, "Shut the hell up! I know! I know I fucked up!" Steve dropped his hands into his lap and stared ahead, having been lulled into submission. He whispered, "I'm sorry. I'm just... scared." Billy grabbed his hand and apologized, "No, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have snapped at you and I should have listened. He shouldn't have hit you, though."

"Why not? You did." There was a bitter sharpness in Steve's voice as he jerked his hand away and turned his head. Apart from his apology, Billy and Steve had not discussed their fight. He knew that they were both avoiding it but that it was something they eventually had to talk about. Billy sighed; realizing now was a better time than any. "I did. I hate myself for it. I wish I could take it all back but I can't. I'm sorry that I ever hurt you. Baby, I promise that I will *never* hurt you again."

Steve continued looking out the passenger window, refusing to meet Billy's gaze. "Steve? Say something please." After a moment, he mumbled, "You've already hurt me again since then." "I –" Billy choked on his words. He could not argue with Steve, as he had hurt him more than once. Billy could feel himself become overwhelmed with emotion. Now that his fear and anger had subsided, it gave away to guilt and sadness. He was crying before he realized it. Steve must have heard him because he finally directed his attention towards Billy.

Billy tried to turn from him, to hide his tears, but it was too late. "Oh, I'm sorry. Please don't cry babe. I was being an asshole." Billy scoffed. "No, you weren't. I was being the asshole. I *am* the asshole. I don't

deserve you, I'm a fucking monster!" Steve reached over and squeezed his arm. "No, no you're not! I've seen real monsters, from this world and beyond. Neil. Demogorgon. Demodogs. And I've heard of even more frightening monsters like Dr. Brenner and the Mind Flayer. Those are monsters. You? You are not a monster just because you've made a few mistakes."

Steve did not understand him. Billy slammed his fists into the steering wheel in frustration. "No, you don't get it! They weren't just a few mistakes. You deserve better. You're good and I'm... not. I'm a piece of shit." Steve took both of Billy's hands and kissed them. "Billy, you are good. I promise that you are. You might not be able to see it but I do. I love you... every part of you. The good and the bad." Billy looked at Steve, his vision partially blurred by his tears, and he could tell that Steve's words were sincere. Billy grabbed his boyfriend and pulled Steve to him.

Billy held on desperately and cried into his shoulder. "I love you so much," he said in between sobs. "But I don't deserve you." "Billy, hush. You are wrong, so wrong. Besides I'm not that good; I've made my own mistakes." Billy scoffed and then sarcastically remarked, "Yeah, you are a real bad boy." Steve chuckled. "Fuck you. I used to be called King Steve for a reason, you know." Billy was relieved he had finally stopped crying; he hated anyone to see his true emotions, especially Steve. "Yeah? What was your line, 'Hey babe, wanna be *queen* for a night?'"

Steve laughed hard and loudly. When he recovered, he owned up to his previous deviances, "Fuck, I was such a dickhead. I'm pretty sure I said that *exactly*, more than once." Billy, despite his melancholy, was able to laugh. "Oh, I can just imagine it, pretty boy. Tell it to me." A confused Steve gave a brief, "Huh?" Billy chuckled. "Give me the line. I want you to say it to me." He gave him a look of suspicion but agreed, "Okay."

Steve prettily bit his lower lip and reached towards Billy, just barely brushing his cheek before slowly tracing his fingers down Billy's chest. He then grabbed a hold of Billy's shirt and leaned in close before whispering in his ear, "What do you say babe? You wanna be my queen for the night?" Billy shuddered and he felt his cock twitch. Not being able to resist, he kissed Steve. He vibrated with laughter

against Billy's lips. "What?" Billy asked him. "It's just... it works every time."

Billy shoved him away and stifled a smile. "Oh fuck you!" Steve raised his brows suggestively. "You can as soon as we get back to Lisa's. We still have a few hours before she and Susan get home from work, right? We could tell Max to get lost." "Well it sounds like you have it all planned out." Steve smiled from ear to ear and nodded. After awaiting a response or reaction from Billy and not receiving one, he asked, "So? What do you say?" Billy thought on it for a moment, his uncertainty stemming from his earlier outburst of emotion.

"Okay, let's go," he said as he quickly squeezed Steve's hand before starting up the Camaro. Once they walked inside the house, they did not make it further than the foyer. Billy called out for Max several times but with no answer, they assumed she wasn't home. Steve ripped off Billy's shirt and shoved him against the door. Billy was amused with his enthusiasm and remarked, "Damn, baby, you would think that we haven't fucked for days." Steve pulled off his own shirt before kissing Billy. He pressed his hips against Billy's, his hard cock eminent, as their tongues tangled.

Steve broke away momentarily and commented, "You are just so fucking sexy. You are also crazy to ever think that you don't deserve me. You'd put a Greek god to shame, Billy." He continued to kiss Billy with the lingering and conflicting notions of want and need enveloped in the taste of his tongue. With the mention of Greek gods, Billy suddenly thought about the possibilities of Steve's ancestry but his mind was fuzzy with lust. His last name was of English origin but he could tell there was something a little more European about his looks. Billy figured that by asking a question, they could slow things down a bit.

He unlatched from Steve's lips and blurted, "What's your heritage?" Dazed with desire, Steve replied with a "Huh?" Billy cleared his throat, ran his hand through Steve's hair, and repeated his question. Steve's eyebrows knotted together with a mix of confusion and concentration. "Umm, English with some Irish and a little French. Why do you ask?" "Just curious," he casually said before pulling Steve in for a kiss. Steve mumbled between their lips, "What about you?" "Hmm?" "What's your heritage?"

Billy held Steve away from him as he answered, "I – I'm not sure. I think my father's side is mostly English but I have no idea about my mother's – she was adopted." "Oh," Steve simply replied. Before Billy could decipher any of Steve's thoughts amongst his features, he quickly kissed him. He wrapped his hands around Steve's neck and kissed him feverishly. Steve put a hand into Billy's jeans before sucking on his neck. Steve hummed little satisfied moans as he trailed down Billy's chest and stomach. He began to unfasten Billy's pants but Billy stopped him.

"Wait. We should go upstairs or something. There are windows, someone might see." Steve laughed quietly and commented, "So?" before continuing what he had started. Before he could react, Billy's pants were around his ankles and his dick was in Steve's mouth. As Steve expertly sucked his cock, Billy gave in and sighed. "Oh well, fuck it." He twisted his hands in Steve's hair and let go of everything. He closed his eyes and gave into the pleasure. Several minutes had passed when there was a sudden sound of something crashing to the floor.

Steve stopped and Billy's eyes flew open. Max was standing before him with her hands over her eyes and her Walkman lying on the floor. "Sorry, sorry, sorry..." she muttered over and over. After becoming frozen from the initial shock, Billy finally put himself into motion. He quickly pulled his jeans up and helped Steve to his feet. "Fuck, I... we thought you weren't here. You definitely were not supposed to see that. I – we should be apologizing, not you." She continued repeating, "Sorry."

Billy groaned, "Max! Shut up! You can look, it's okay now." She gingerly lifted her fingers from her face, carefully peeking to be certain that Billy was telling the truth. She stared at them, her eyes wide and her mouth slightly agape. Steve was bright red, avoiding meeting Max's gaze as he stood with his arms folded against his chest. Billy sighed and questioned Max, "Did you not hear me yell your name about 10 times?" She silently shook her head and gestured to the device on the floor.

Billy nervously played with a lock of his hair as he tried to think of what to say. Wanting to rescue Steve from the awkwardness, he told him, "Steve, why don't you go upstairs for a bit?" He swiftly nodded

his head and made off towards the stairs, mumbling a quick "Sorry," as he passed Max. She shut her mouth momentarily before urgently uttering, "I had the volume all the way up and I was getting hungry so I had come down to get something to eat but I thought I was the only one here." He walked over to Max and guided her towards the kitchen.

"It's not your fault. We shouldn't have done – that – out in the open. Take a seat; I'll fix you up something. What do you want?" "Hot ham and cheese, please." Billy threw a couple slices of bread in the toaster as he got out the ham and a square of cheese. "I'm really sorry that you had to see that Max." He looked at her and attempted to determine what was on her mind. She denied him eye contact and silently sat at the peninsula. The toaster dinged and Billy put one slice of bread on a plate before piling on the ham and cheese and placing the other slice on top to form a sandwich.

He put the plate into the microwave before asking Max, "So, do you have any thoughts or questions about what you saw?" Billy felt as though it was the most appropriate route to take. He hoped she was not too traumatized by what she had witnessed just moments ago. She looked up at him with bewilderment and after a moment, braved a question. "Does that actually... feel good?" Billy nervously chuckled and answered with honesty, "Yes." "There are some girls that have done that in my grade but they all complain about it."

The microwave dinged and he took out Max's plate before putting it in front of her. Billy swallowed, hard. He did not know how to digest the fact that Max was now going to associate blowjobs with Steve and himself. Also, his protectiveness as a big brother was kicking in. He hoped that she was not in the same mindset as those girls and would wait to have sex. However, he refrained from saying anything to Max because he knew she was not only smart but also independent and had the right to make her own decisions on the matter.

Instead he told her, "It only feels good to the person receiving. Girls don't really get much enjoyment out of it. If any boy tries to pressure you into doing something that you don't want to do, you let me know so that I can kick his ass, okay?" A slight smile spread over her lips and she nodded. She hesitated for a moment and asked, "So, does that mean sex doesn't feel good for girls?" Max took a big bite out of her

sandwich and waited for Billy to respond.

He looked at the floor and tried to formulate words. "Umm... no. It can be good for girls – amazing. Guys can do something similar to what you saw, just different, uh – parts. Also regular sex can be enjoyable." Billy rubbed his hands on his thighs absentmindedly as he attempted to conclude the awkward conversation. Max nodded and seemed content with what Billy had told her. He waited for a moment to see if she had anything else to ask but when he just received silence, he told her, "Hold on..."

Billy quickly went over to where Max had dropped her Walkman. He hoped it wasn't broken, knowing that it was a gift from Max's father that she loved. Luckily when he put the cassette back in and checked, it still worked. He walked over and handed it to Max. "Here you go." "Thanks." He grabbed the earphones and put them over Max's ears. "Go grab a tape and stay in your room for awhile, okay?" She grimaced and griped, "Gross," but took the rest of her sandwich and made her way towards the stairs.

Once he heard her door slam shut, Billy headed up to see Steve. He was still in the bed, looking quite disheveled. Billy got into the bed next to him and sighed. "Thank god that's finally over with." Steve nuzzled into him and lamented, "I'm so embarrassed, babe. Max probably hates me now – not that she was a big fan before or anything. She's not going to tell anyone is she?" "No, I'm certain she won't tell anyone. I think she is just as embarrassed about it as us. Don't worry, baby."

Billy gently guided Steve by his chin and kissed him. After pulling away, Billy purred, "Let's finish what we started. We don't have too much longer before Susan and Lisa get home." Steve pounced on him, which was enough of an affirmative answer for Billy. Steve took control for a bit until Billy flipped him off of him and pinned him down to the bed. He kissed and nibbled Steve's delicate skin, finding delight in watching it redden from his touch. Every time that Billy lightly nipped at him, Steve took a sharp intake of breath before letting out a little moan. Billy fucking loved it.

He pulled Steve's shorts and underwear down in one swift motion. Billy grasped Steve's tumescent cock before running his tongue along

the shaft and briefly over the tip. He licked his lips and slowly wrapped them around the end of Steve's dick. Only momentarily and as he pulled away, his lips suctioned hard over the tip. Not expecting it, Steve let out a startled noise. "Oh fuck babe, that was amazing." He did it again and felt Steve's cock kick. "Don't cum yet," Billy said with amusement.

Steve softly chuckled and remarked, "I'll try my best but you aren't exactly helping." With that, Billy took the entirety of Steve's cock into his mouth just to wet it. He then removed his own pants before crawling up next to Steve, gently running his hands through his hair, down his face, and over his chest. Billy tenderly kissed Steve, their lips tingling with electricity. Billy slowly progressed from soft kisses to harder and more intrusive kisses. Steve followed suit and matched Billy. Finally, Billy sucked on Steve's lower lip a final time before moving on to his neck.

Steve moaned and writhed as Billy kissed on his neck and caressed his body. Billy then whispered in Steve's ear, "Turn over, baby." Steve beamed and eagerly did as he was told. Billy kissed the freckles and marks covering Steve's back as he travelled towards the curve of his ass. He made sure to give attention to each one of Steve's butt cheeks before parting them. Billy brushed his tongue from the indentation of Steve's back, along his spine, until it found its way between the rounded mounds of his derriere.

A breathy sigh of complete ecstasy escaped from Steve as Billy began to tongue his asshole. Billy swirled his tongue around Steve's hole, alternating by putting slight pressure against his entrance. Billy teased him for a while, until he finally began working his tongue inside. Once Steve was nice and wet, Billy sucked on his index finger before easing it within Steve's tight hole. Steve moaned loudly in response and rocked his hips back onto Billy's finger. Prompted by Steve's reaction, Billy added another digit.

While still fingering Steve's ass, Billy rummaged through the nightstand until he found the hidden lubricant. He applied a liberal amount on his fingers and Steve's orifice and continued to finger Steve's ass. Steve moaned and when he finally begged for it, Billy then applied the lube to his own aching cock. He kissed all over Steve's back while he squeezed his ass cheeks. Billy subsequently

grabbed Steve by the hips and swiftly pulled Steve up and towards him.

As Billy slowly thrust his cock inside Steve, he sighed with pleasure. "Oh fuck, baby. You feel so good." He leaned against Steve, kissing his neck, while Steve slid back and forth on Billy's dick. Steve turned his head towards Billy to kiss him before saying, "So do you, babe." Even as Steve's moans continued to grow in volume and in agony, Billy slowly made love to him. Steve attempted to speed his movements up, but Billy was able to prevent him from doing so.

Finally, when Billy was close to orgasm, he fucked Steve hard and fast. Steve was screaming and coming all over the sheets while Billy came inside him. They collapsed into each other with Billy resting his head on Steve's chest. After he caught his breath, he chuckled mirthfully. "What?" Steve asked, still a little winded. "I just hope Max still has the headphones on." Steve rolled his eyes and commented, "I'm not *that* loud." "Yes you are. Don't worry about it though. I love it. However, I'm just worried the neighbors might call the police thinking someone's being murdered."

Steve shoved him away and crossed his arms in anger as he turned away from Billy. Knowing that he wouldn't stay mad for longer than a few minutes, Billy snaked his arm around Steve and apologized, "Baby, I'm sorry." Steve did not respond but allowed Billy to continue embracing him. After less than five minutes of silence, Steve sighed and rotated back towards Billy. Billy smiled and kissed him sweet and briefly. "I just want to say," Steve started quietly with his eyes closed. "that was the best sex that I've ever had."

His eyes opened and focused on Billy, who was beaming. "Really?" Steve nodded while wearing a small grin. "Every time that we have sex is the best sex that I have had. Just because it's with you," Billy confessed before passionately kissing Steve. After a while, Steve pulled away and professed, "William Herbert Hargrove, I love you. I will always love you."

Billy asked as he laughed, "How on earth do you know my middle name?" "Max had to give it when you were in the hospital." "You've never told me yours." "It's Joseph." Billy smiled and told him, "Steven Joseph Harrington, I will love you until I die." "Actually, it's Steven

Joseph Harrington III," Steve corrected him with sarcastic seriousness. Billy then burst into a fit of laughter.

For two days, Billy and Steve were loved up and shacked up at Lisa's house. They rarely left the house and were definitely more careful about getting caught. Max made herself scarce and the two of them were thankful. Besides having sex, Billy and Steve talked for hours. Billy told Steve everything about his mother. He also confessed that he had been a little overweight and was terribly bullied until 6th grade. Billy explained that he knew that was why he was an asshole but that it didn't excuse his behavior.

Steve talked about his past dreams and ambitions. When he was little, he wanted to become a teacher. His father said that it was not a job for a man, which eventually deterred Steve from the idea. His father had also contributed to extinguishing several other dreams of Steve's. He had thought about becoming a professional tennis player but his parents both said he was not good enough. Steve had been considering attending university abroad in a Spanish speaking country before dating Nancy, but his father refused to pay for it and told him, "It's not like you would get in anyway."

Billy and Steve also talked about their relationship, more specifically the future of their relationship. Steve talked about how Billy had great potential, that he was going places. "Billy, you are so smart and hardworking. It would be a shame for you to waste any opportunities that you may receive on any account, but especially on my account. I do not want to hold you back. You should do whatever your heart desires but just so you know, I will follow you wherever you go. There's nothing here in Hawkins that would prevent me from chasing after you."

Billy looked at him with uncertainty, knowing how much Steve cared for those stupid kids, and asked, "Are you sure about that?" "Yes. I will miss some people, of course, but there are telephones and letters. Everyone that I care about will do just fine without me. They are all going places. They all have futures that I can't even begin to imagine. Me? I have nothing except you. You are my future, nothing else matters." Billy softly stroked Steve's face.

"Baby, I don't want you to be my shadow. I want you to have something of your own. Don't listen to what other people have told you. I believe in you and I believe that you can do anything. Whatever you want to do, just know that I would support you. We will do this together but it won't work if we lose our individuality along the way." Steve silently nodded and a moment later, he told Billy, "I guess I could attend community college or something." Billy gave him a warm smile and nodded before encouraging him, "That's a great start."

Before they had a chance to really explore the depths of that conversation, a knock at the door interrupted them. "Come in!" Billy shouted. The door opened and Max entered the room. Her eyes nervously darted around and between Billy and Steve. She was still apprehensive about catching the two of them at it, again. "What do you want?" Billy demanded with annoyance lingering in his voice. She sighed and then launched into her pitch, "So you know how there is that big town meeting tonight? Everyone, well all of the party, is planning to hang out at the Byers' house."

She paused for a moment before continuing, "Nancy and Jonathon are in Chicago and all of the parents are going to be at the meeting. Hopper has to be there too. Mrs. Byers was wondering if the two of you would consider supervising us." Max anxiously looked at Billy and Steve, awaiting an answer for an unasked question. Billy groaned and prodded her, "Are you asking or telling?" Her eyes momentarily grew large and then she politely asked, "Will you please supervise us over at the Byers'? You two are the only available 'adults' who know about Jane."

Billy rolled his eyes at Max but agreed to her proposition, "Okay, but we should get paid for putting up with all of you." "Thanks! I'll tell Mrs. Byers, I'm sure she would pay..." Billy laughed and cut her off, "I was just kidding about getting paid." Max smiled and ran out of the room, presumably to ring Mrs. Byers. A few minutes later, her thundering footsteps up the stairs could be heard. Panting she relayed to the two of them, "Okay... it's all... set. 5pm. We have... to... pick up... Dustin." Billy glanced at the alarm clock on the nightstand. They had a little over two hours.

By the time all three of them had showered, dressed, and in Billy's

case, prepped and primed, it was around 4:30. Billy was still messing with his hair when Steve suddenly approached and put his arms around him. "Babe, it looks perfect. We are just going to the Byers' anyway." Billy turned to face him. "I want to look good for you." Steve sheepishly smiled and a slight blush appeared upon his cheeks. "You always look good to me."

Billy gazed into Steve's warm and inviting brown eyes as he caressed his face. Billy ran his thumb over Steve's lips and whispered, "You always look good to me too, baby." He entwined himself with Steve before kissing him. While occupied, there was a small clearing of a throat coming from the doorway. Billy disentangled himself and caught sight of Max with her arms crossed. "How long have you been standing there?" Billy inquired. "Too long," she said with a false grimace. Her features soon morphed into an approving grin.

"What do you want?" Billy had intended for there to be more venom in his words but failed. Max continued to smile and asked, "It's nearly 5, are you two ready to go?" Looking to Steve for affirmation and receiving a miniscule nod, Billy confirmed, "Yes, let's go pick up that curly haired kid." Max rolled her eyes and corrected him, "His name is Dustin." "Yeah, whatever. Let's go." They were about to walk out the door when Billy had a thought.

"Wait. Max, did you tell Susan that we were leaving?" The expression on her face was enough of an answer for Billy. He groaned before heading into the kitchen to find something to write on. He rummaged through the drawers until he found a piece of paper and a pen. He wrote a quick note to Susan, telling her where they were going. "What's the number?" he asked Max before adding it to the note. "Okay, now we can go." They took Billy's car and headed to Dustin's house.

The kid was waiting out front, ready to go. "I thought we agreed on 5pm, you are 10 minutes late!" Dustin ranted as he approached Billy's window. "Do you want a ride or not, kid? Get in and shut up." Dustin did as he was told. Billy knew that he did not like him and was probably a little afraid of him. Once they were in motion, Billy told Dustin, "Sorry kid. I had to write a note for Max's mom, that's why we are running late." Billy could see a little of the apprehension fade from Dustin's face and felt satisfied.

Once they were at the Byers', Steve and Billy got out of the car and then Dustin and Max piled out of the backseat. Billy looked around and a bad feeling washed over him. He wasn't certain what it was, he didn't see anything, but maybe it was something in the air. Steve must have noticed his hesitation and asked, "What?" "Something just feels wrong." Steve peered around at their surroundings and concluded, "I don't see or hear anything. What is it?"

Billy shrugged. "I don't know. I'm probably just being paranoid or something. Let's just go inside." Steve nodded and started walking towards the house with Billy following close behind. The other kids were already there. Mrs. Wheeler had dropped off Mike and Lucas right before they had arrived. When Billy entered the house, Max had already found Lucas and they were quietly holding hands and whispering in a corner. Despite himself, Billy was smiling as he watched their little interaction. It was apparent that they cared deeply for each other.

Billy suddenly realized this was the first time that he had been around the group when there wasn't a crisis being discussed. He felt compelled and asked, "So, what is it you geeks like to do for fun?" Dustin spoke up and divulged their plans, "We were wanting to start a new campaign. I doubt you would be interested. We usually have to force Max and Steve to participate and besides it would be too many players." Confused, Billy questioned, "A campaign for what?" "Dungeons & Dragons of course." "What?"

Dustin begrudgingly launched into a long and drawn out explanation of the game. After what seemed to be an eternity for Billy, Dustin finally was finished. "So maybe if you just watch this time, you can join in another time." Though just the description of the game had nearly bored Billy to death, he shrugged and agreed, "Yeah, maybe." Dustin asked for a raise of hands of who wanted in on the campaign. Everyone raised his or her hands except for Billy, Max, and Steve. Dustin sighed. "Max and Steve, are you sure?" They both nodded their heads rapidly. "Not even as Dungeon Master?"

Steve chimed in, "No, I'll sit this one out." He glanced at Billy, making Billy assume that he was the reason why he did not want to participate. Max groaned and rolled her eyes. "Fine, I guess I will be the DM. I don't have anything better to do and I might as well have

stayed home if I'm just going to sit around." Dustin, along with the other kids, grinned. They were just about to begin their campaign around the kitchen table when a momentary silence was interrupted by the sound of a car door slamming shut outside. The strange girl, Jane, had jumped to her feet in a panic.

"They're back," she simply said. Not realizing who she was talking about at first, Billy demanded, "Who?" Steve told him in a shaky whisper, "Those kids with the powers." His initial gut feeling when they had arrived had been correct. Though he was terrified, someone had to spring into action. "Weapons! What are our options? Everyone grab something," Billy harshly whispered to the group. Steve gestured towards Jane. "She's our best weapon against them. Knives and knickknacks aren't really going to be effective."

Billy grabbed his arm. "Just find something, anything. Come on, we have to give them everything we got!" Billy's touch must have shaken Steve from his state of shock, as he immediately started searching and giving directions to the kids. Dustin was trying to get everyone's attention for a while without success, so he finally yelled, "Guys! Maybe they aren't here on hostile terms! We should figure out what they want before we all start freaking out." Billy scoffed as he wrapped his head around what the kid was saying.

"What? I'm pretty sure they aren't here to make daisy chains. I don't think they will give us a chance to ask." Jane suddenly stood still and after closing her eyes for a moment, she responded, "No. Papa is here. He wants me. No one else matters." The hint of hopelessness in her voice deeply concerned Billy. He strode over to her and grabbed her by the shoulders. "What the fuck do you mean by that?" She looked up into his eyes with tears in her own. "He will kill all of you if it means he can get me."

Before Billy had a chance to process the strange girl's words, there was a banging at the door. Steve commanded, "Billy, go to the back door. Everyone else, stay back." From the other side of the door, a man's calm voice called, "We do not want anyone to get hurt but if Eleven does not come quietly, then there are no guarantees." Billy reluctantly followed Steve's instruction and stood guard at the back door.

The man spoke again, Billy could barely hear him at the back of the house, "Eleven, it's Papa. Come out so you can be reunited with your family. You've met before but under tense circumstances. I promise no harm will come to your friends if you agree to come home without fighting." Jane had dropped to the floor and was sobbing. "No! You are a liar! You will hurt them!" she screamed at the Dr. Brenner. "Eleven, I give you my promise. No one else needs to be harmed. If you come with us, we will leave your friends alone. I urge you to surrender yourself for their sake."

Though she was still crying, Jane stood up straight and determined before quickly looking out the window. Mike rushed to her and cried, "No! You can't! I won't let him take you!" He tightly embraced her and Jane whispered something in his ear. He let go of her and then Jane inaudibly told Steve something. He nodded in response and moved to the door, while Jane stood directly in front of it. "Okay! I will go with you Papa." She stretched her hands out in front of her and then nodded to Steve. With a quick and sudden movement, Steve pulled the door wide open.

Jane let out a scream as she used her telekinetic powers to throw the man and the kids with the powers several feet from the door. She rushed out of the house with Steve and the other kids following, weapons in hand. Though it seemed like a reckless plan, Billy quickly ran through the house after them. When Billy had exited the house, the sight of Steve knocking the bone crushing girl unconscious with a mop greeted him. Billy looked for his own target. His eyes locked on the pain-inducing boy. Before the kid had a chance to get to his feet, Billy was on top of him.

He punched the boy several times before telling him, "Don't you fucking dare get up or try that pain bullshit." The child weakly croaked, "Okay." Billy hopped to his feet and surveyed the scene. Jane's brother appeared to be in a heated argument with their father. Billy looked for Jane and saw her staring down a girl that he didn't recognize. Jane appeared shattered as she looked down at the punker girl. Mike was at her side. Lucas, Max, Will, and Dustin were standing their ground with the disappearing girl who had somehow divided herself into four.

He looked for Steve, finding him heading towards Jane. "Jane! If she's

not a threat, leave her! We've got bigger problems," Steve said as he turned to look at Brenner and his son. Billy followed Steve's gaze to the duo. Suddenly, Dr. Brenner shoved his son away and reached behind him. He pulled out a gun and pointed it at his son. "Do not make me do something I will regret." With Jane distracted, the man quickly rushed towards Mike. Billy tried to warn him but it was too late.

Dr. Brenner had Mike in his grasp with the gun pointed at his head. "Eleven, if you value your friend's life, you will get into the van and leave with us." Steve moved between Jane and Dr. Brenner. "She's not going anywhere and you are going to let him go." Billy shook his head at Steve's brave stupidity. A grim sneer spread over Brenner's lips. "What are you going to do about it?" In response, Steve broke the mop over his knee and held the makeshift jagged weapon in his hand.

The sneer dropped from Brenner's features as he raised the gun and pointed it at Steve. Billy heard himself instinctively scream, "NO!" as he rushed towards Brenner, Mike, and the gun. He wasn't quick enough. Brenner fired the weapon. Billy's heart sunk as he watched Steve grasp his abdomen and fall to his knees. Billy changed directions and sprinted towards him. When he reached him, he clutched Steve's hand over the bullet wound and pleaded, "No, no, no, no."

The color was rapidly draining from Steve as blood continued seeping through both of their fingers. Though things were happening all around them, Billy only saw Steve. He removed his shirt and tried to stop the bleeding as he held Steve against him. He sobbed as Steve looked up into his eyes. "Stay with me. Help is coming. It's going to be okay," Billy tried to soothe Steve and himself. One of Billy's arms held on to the wound as well as holding Steve against him while he grasped Steve's face with his other hand. Steve smiled up at him, small and weak, as his eyelids began to flutter. "I love you Billy." It *broke* Billy. He knew that Steve was fading.

He choked on his tears as he mustered up the words, "Baby, I – I love you. Please, please don't go. I love you and I need you." He desperately kissed Steve as he sobbed. Through the salty wetness of his tears, Billy could feel the cold and the stillness of Steve's lips. Billy

pulled away and with blurry eyes, he saw that Steve's own eyes had closed. He shook Steve and screamed but it was no use. He was dead.

Steve Harrington was dead.